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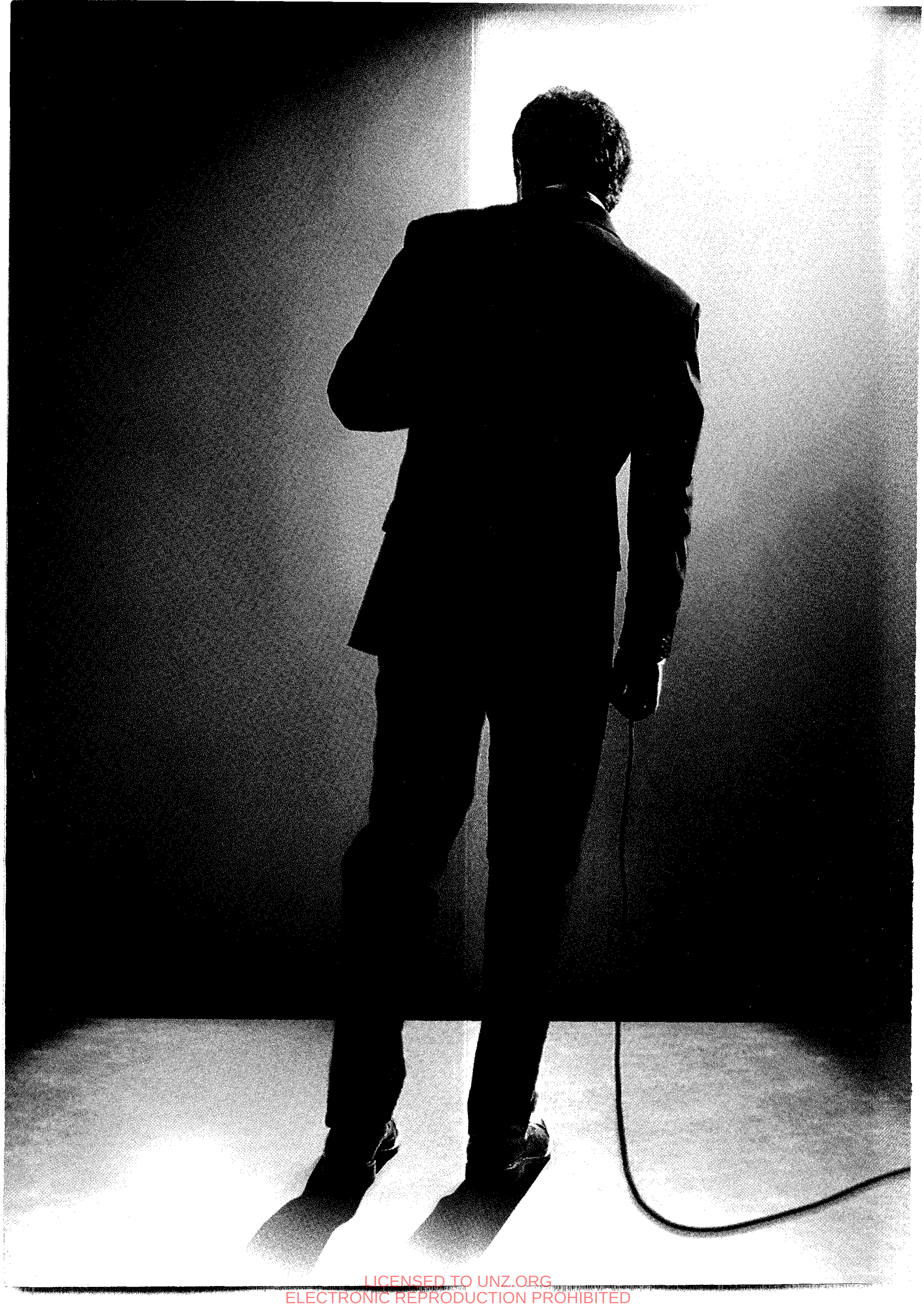

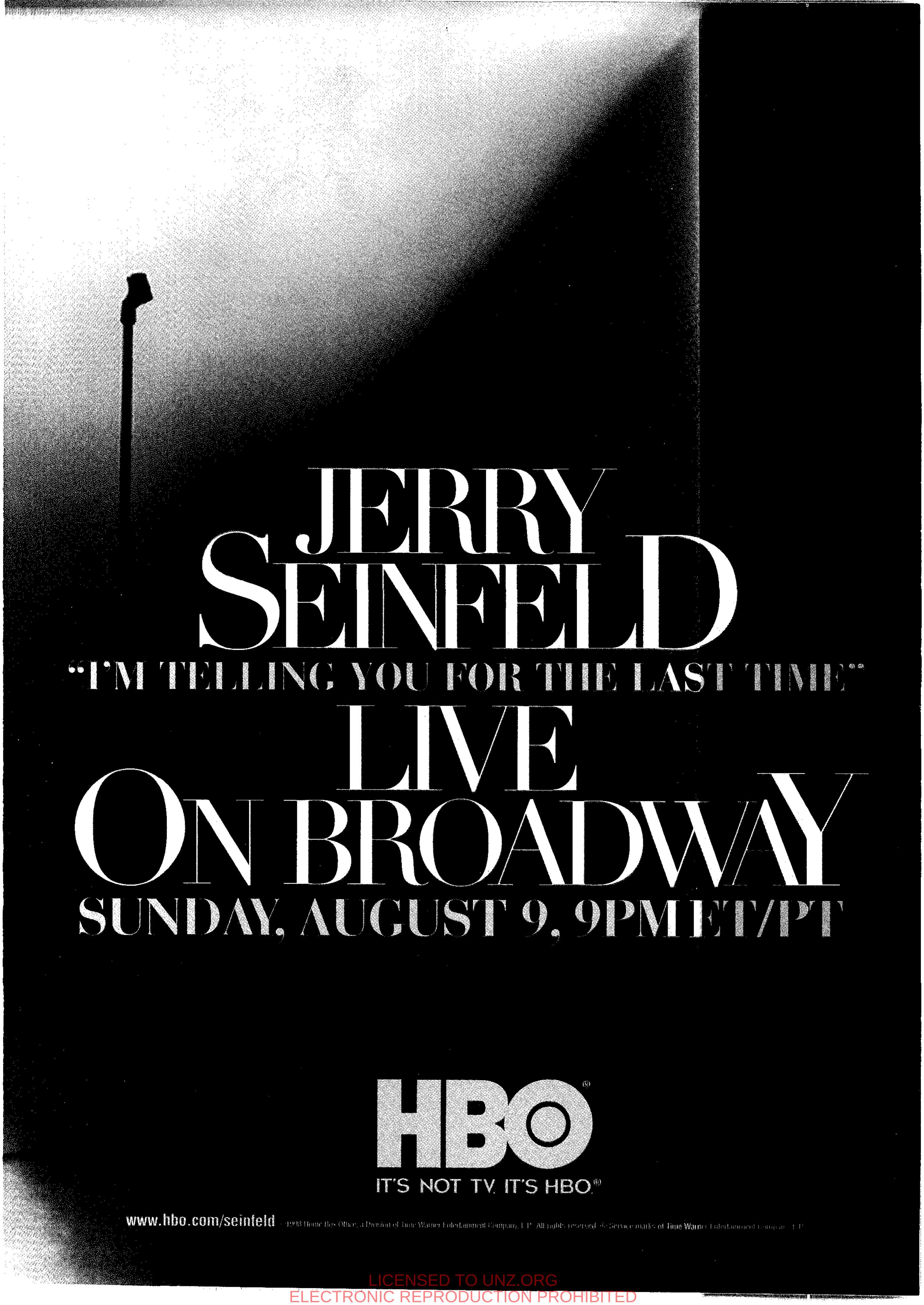JERRY SEINFELD

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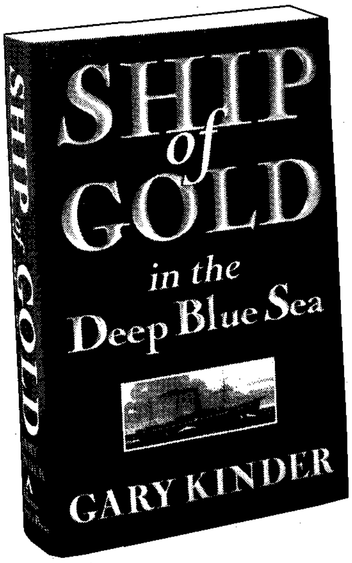

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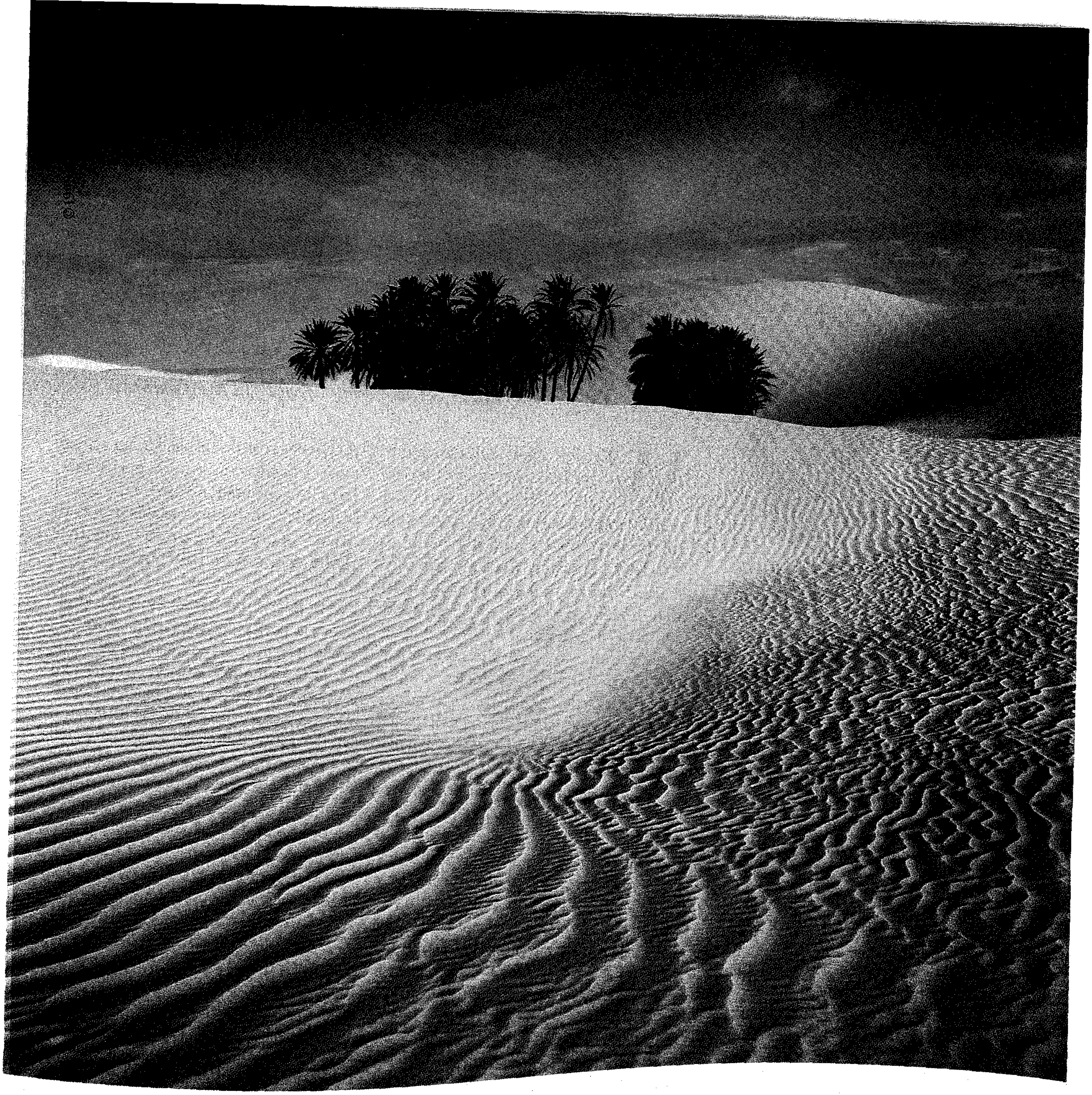
THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for seven combined issues: Feb. 23 & Mar. 2, Apr. 27 & May 4, June 22 & 29, Aug. 24 & 31, Oct. 19 & 26, Dec. 14 & 21, Dec. 28 & Jan. 4) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXIV, No. 23, August 10, 1998. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No.190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $39.95; two years, $72.00. In Canada, one year, $83.00 (includes GST and HST where applicable). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationale Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $91.00, payable in advance.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80328-6447. PRINTED IN U.S.A.



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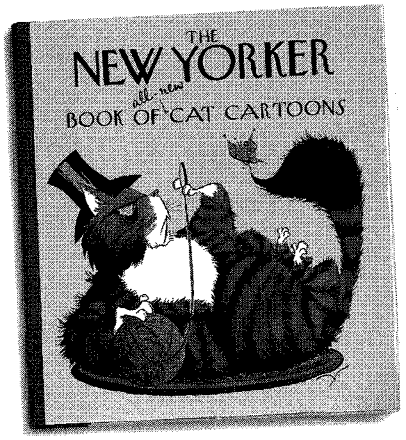

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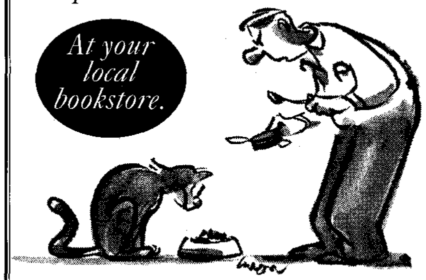

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COMMENT

MALLING MANHATTAN

The new Columbus Circle might as well be in the suburbs.

We don't build cities anymore; we build entertainment centers. The good news in last week's announcement that something might actually get built at Columbus Circle is that New York's most protracted drama of architectural angst may finally be nearing the end of its run. The bad news is that the dénouement is going to be another example of the North Michigan Avenue school of urbanism—the school that specializes in fifty-story vacuum cleaners that suck the energy off the streets and exhaust it into private atriums. The pair of seven-hundred-and-fifty-foot towers that a partnership led by Time Warner and The Related Companies are to put up will be a mall for urban sophisticates: a mixture of offices, condominiums, an upscale hotel, retail space, and movie theatres, just like the ones in Chicago, and in San Francisco, Boston, and other cities that ought to know better.

This is a corporate building through and through, and, although it isn't bad architecturally—its two loosely Art Moderne towers are a knockoff of the Century and the Majestic apartment buildings on Central Park West, blown up to gigantic proportions—it is one of those places in which design matters less than size, and size matters less than what goes on inside. Urban activity once depended on lusty happenstance. Now it's generated in vitro—reproduced in isolated environments where lots of urban functions are grafted together inside vast, private structures in which everything is planned and controlled. No wonder Time Warner sees this project as a perfect headquarters. Sony already has an urban entertainment center of its own, on Madison Avenue, and Disney has buffed and polished Forty-second Street into a de-facto version of the same thing. Time Warner will no longer have to settle for stodgy old Rockefeller Center, a place whose new landlords have been working hard to doll it up but which—thank goodness—is doomed to look forever just the way it did in the nineteen-thirties, when streets still mattered and people went indoors mainly to go upstairs.

In most American cities nowadays, people think of streets as passageways, not experiences. The street used to be the essential urban element—the locus of magnificent serendipity, where public life went on unplanned by any one architect. There are still more real streets in New York than in any other city in America, but the trend is clearly going in the wrong direction. We still have Madison Avenue, and we still have

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THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. David Carey, publisher; Pamela Maffei McCarthy, senior vice-president/deputy editor; Pamela H. Older, senior vice-president/operations; David M. May, associate publisher; Brenda Saget, associate publisher; Peter Armour, vice-president/circulation director; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, vice-president/special-projects director; Maurie Perl, vice-president/public-relations director; Robert A. Silverstone, vice-president/business manager; Devereux Chatillon, vice-president/general counsel; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; James Oates, director of marketing and planning; Stephanie Sandberg, director of promotion and events. For advertising inquiries, please call Gretel Schneider or Richard Skeen, advertising directors, at (212) 536-5400. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. © 1998 by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc., published through its division The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

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Upper Broadway (though near Lincoln Center it is coming to look more and more like a mall that someone forgot to build a roof on), and no power on earth is ever going to obliterate Canal Street or Orchard Street. But the World Financial Center, in lower Manhattan (for example), could be in any suburb, and it is the kind of place that tells us more about the forces shaping New York today than Orchard Street does or ever will again.

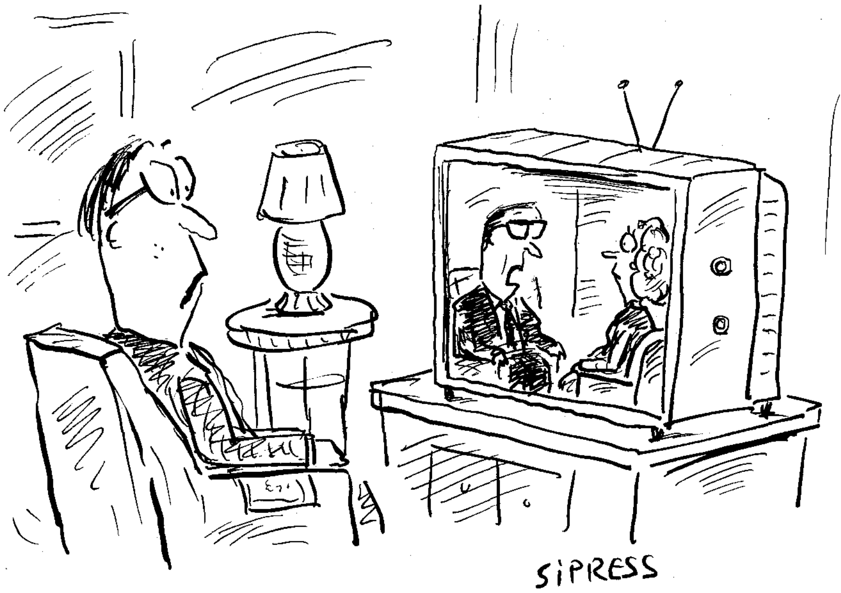
Of course, the fate of Columbus Circle was almost far worse, and this new project, designed by the architect David Childs, of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, has to be counted a victory, and not only because Columbus Circle, now marked by the aging and banal Coliseum, the glitzy Trump International Hotel, and the downright weird 2 Columbus Circle, is one of New York's most prominent architectural wastelands. Although the new project looks eerily like David Childs's schemes in the late eighties for the developer Mortimer Zuckerman, whose plans were pilloried as a symbol of greed and excess, Childs's latest try is both smaller and better than his earlier ones. And the centerpiece of its curving base, a thousand-seat hall for Jazz at Lincoln Center, will take much of the curse off this mall-style urbanism, and ought to reassure all who enter that they are not in Chicago—not even when Joe Williams is singing onstage.

The project is better this time partly because Rudy Giuliani is mayor. Giuliani, who has the right to veto any plans the Metropolitan Transportation Authority comes up with for the site, has made good use of the determination and brazen bullying whereby he has cowed into submission everyone from topless dancers to pesky pedestrians on Fifth Avenue. Last summer, he let it be known that he wouldn't approve any skyscraper for Columbus Circle that didn't include a significant public amenity.

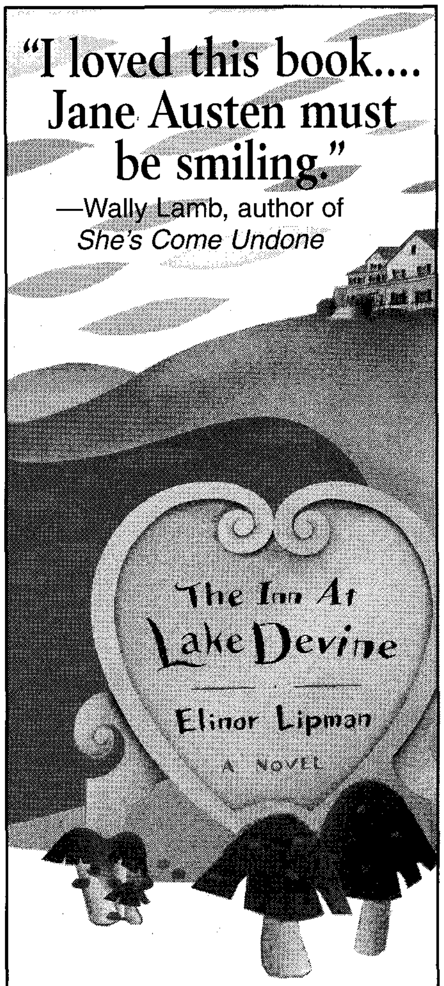
The insistence of the Mayor and his planning-commission chairman, Joseph B. Rose, that Columbus Circle be a monument not to greed alone but to greed *and* culture reclaimed some authority and public conscience for the whole process of city planning—a process that had been deeply devalued in the eighties, when the city, instead of setting the rules for sane development, seemed to be mainly goading developers on.

Conscience, however, can take you only so far in the planning game—a game that in this case degenerated into fourteen years of struggle among governments, developers, the courts, and various do-gooders who challenged the process by which a peerless site at the southwest corner of Central Park was being disposed of. What the game has yielded is a better version of what almost got built in the late eighties. It's something that Newark or Detroit would kill for. New Yorkers, though, should properly have mixed feelings about it.

—PAUL GOLDBERGER



"As I said earlier, Michelle, I won't answer questions about economic or foreign policy. I'm here to talk about my sexual escapades."



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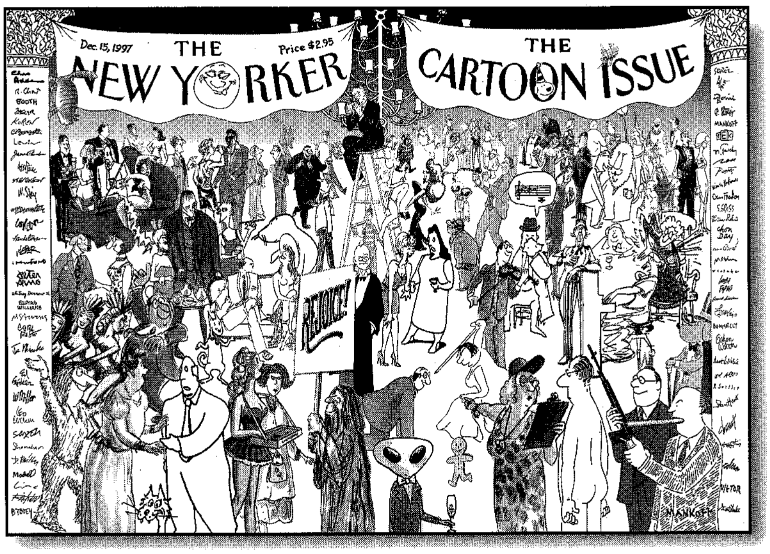

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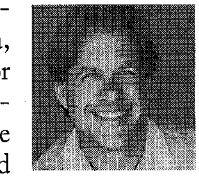
CONTRIBUTORS

PHILIP GOUREVITCH ("Pol Pot's Children," p. 40), a staff writer, is the author of the forthcoming book "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda."

GILLES PERESS (Photographs, pp. 40, 44) has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants, among them the 1992-93 Guggenheim Fellowship and, in 1979 and 1984, the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. His books include "Telex: Iran," "Farewell to Bosnia," "The Silence," and the upcoming "The Graves: Srebrenica and Vukovar."



TIMOTHY FERRIS ("Seeing in the Dark," p. 54), a professor emeritus of journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of "The Whole Shebang: A State of the Universe(s) Report" and the writer and narrator of the upcoming PBS documentary "Life Beyond Earth."

JANE MAYER ("Talk of the Town," pp. 25, 27), a staff writer and a political correspondent for *The New Yorker*, is the co-author of "Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas." She lives in Washington, D.C.

JEFFREY ROSEN ("The Perjury Trap," p. 28), a staff writer, is the legal affairs editor of *The New Republic* and an associate professor at the George Washington University Law School.

ALEX ROSS ("The Unforgiven," p. 64), who has been a contributor to the magazine since 1993, is *The New Yorker's* music critic. He lives in New York City.

JOHN McPHEE ("Swimming with Canoes," p. 33) began contributing to *The New Yorker* in 1965, when the magazine published "A Sense of Where You Are," a Profile of the basketball player Bill Bradley. His latest book, "Annals of the Former World," came out this year. Most of its contents appeared in these pages. ♦

THE MAIL

IN THIS CORNER...

Arthur Krystal's article about George MacDonald Fraser's raffish and original novel about the ex-slave heavyweight phenomenon Tom Molineaux, "Black Ajax" (A Critic at Large, July 20th), opens with an absurd conceit: that Molineaux "set sail from New York with the bold idea of becoming the heavyweight champion of the world."

Some fifty years ago, I published an article on Molineaux in *True* magazine; I had researched it in "Pugilistica" (Vol. I), by Henry Downes Miles, a ring reporter for the London *Daily Press* and *Bell's Life in London*, as well as in the groundbreaking Pierce Egan's "Boxiana." In 1809, when Molineaux sailed for England (having apparently been taken there by sailors who had seen him lick a Prize Ring vet on the docks), American journals weren't given to accounts of the prowess of Tom Cribb, the English champion. And it was only after Molineaux knocked out a respected trial horse, Tom Blake, that he and his mentor, the unique black American boxer Bill Richmond, had the audacity to challenge Cribb for the championship.

I also question Krystal's assertion that Molineaux was allowed to challenge Cribb only because "no one expected a black man to know the finer points of boxing—Richmond, an honorary Englishman, being the exception." On the contrary, the summary of the Blake fight in "Pugilistica" describes Molineaux as having "evinced great improvement in the science of pugilism, particularly in the art of giving," or punching accurately, and "gluttony," or courage and the ability to take a punch. This fight established Molineaux as the most feared fighter on the scene. Cribb didn't take the fight because he knew the black invader lacked science but because, faced with a legitimate challenge to his supremacy, he had no choice.

How Molineaux managed to knock Cribb cold, even after his fingers were broken by hooligans who stormed the ring, and how his victory was thwarted by Cribb's second, is summed up by Krystal as "he just was not allowed to win." But, considering the stakes for the British, this understatement makes bloodless a bloody event. I treasure an etching by George Cruikshank, done immediately after Cribb's stolen victory, and every time I look at it I can hear the patriotic Brits screaming for the blood of their black American victim. Molineaux, who fought a century before Jack Johnson, should have been the first black American heavyweight champion.

BUDD SCHULBERG
Westhampton Beach, N.Y.

Arthur Krystal replies:

Mr. Schulberg is obviously acquainted with Regency boxing, but still rehashes points I made in my piece (e.g., Jack Johnson). As for those of his objections that need to be addressed: Mr. Fraser writes of Tom Molineaux, "And you've come to England to fight Tom Cribb. Why?" Because, in the words of boxing historian Paul Magriel, "he had gone... with the purpose of taking the championship away from Tom Cribb." Another historian, Elliott J. Gorn, notes that Molineaux "sailed for England with hopes of attaining pugilistic fame." As I made clear, the road to fame led through Tom Cribb. Cribb was the *man*, and most Britons knew it. For Molineaux to have sparred and consorted with British sailors and *not* to have heard of Cribb (the Michael Jordan of his day) is the absurd conceit here.

If Schulberg believes that skill alone got Molineaux a title shot, then why were the odds weighted so heavily in Cribb's favor, and why did Cribb not train? Schulberg relies on Miles's "Pugilistica," which wasn't published until 1863. Miles wasn't on the scene, but Egan was. He wrote, as I noted, that Molineaux "astonished everyone... by his acquaintance with the science, which was far greater than any had given him credit for." No one expected Cribb to lose, so it is ludicrous to claim that he had no choice but to take the fight. As for the broken finger (not fingers), it is certain only that it was injured. Anyway, the melee occurred in the nineteenth round and apparently didn't hinder Molineaux from punishing Cribb for another fourteen rounds. ◆

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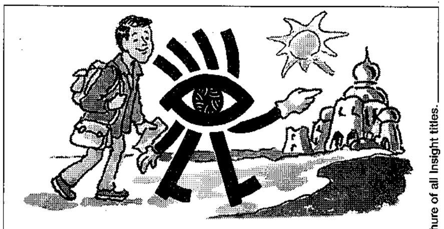

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Collected Stories—Uta Hagen stars as a mentor to a young novelist, in Donald Margulies's 1997 drama. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Communicating Doors—Mary-Louise Parker, Patricia Hodges, and David McCallum star in Alan Ayckbourn's comic thriller, set in London in 1978, 1998, and 2018, in which two women travel in time to change their fate. Previews begin Aug. 5. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 13th St. 239-6200.)

Cymbeline—Andrei Serban is the director of the New York Shakespeare Festival's second outdoor production of the season. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

Eugene O'Neill Festival—Playwrights Theatre undertakes O'Neill's œuvre over the next five years. Aug. 4-5 at 7:30: A revue of popular songs the playwright used in his plays, starring Steve Ross and K. T. Sullivan. . . . ¶ Aug. 6 and Aug. 8 at 7:30: "A Wife for a Life," "The Web," and "Thirst." . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 7:30 and Aug. 9 at 3: "Recklessness," "Warnings," and "Fog." This year's festival continues through Sept. 11. (Provincetown Playhouse, 133 MacDougal St. 279-4200.)

Jean Cocteau Rep—Opening the season with Sartre's "No Exit." Previews begin Aug. 7. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Jerry Seinfeld—Out of the box and onto the boards, with a brief run of his standup routine "I'm Telling You for the Last Time." Aug. 5-8 at 7 and 10 and Aug. 9 at 5 and 8:30. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 563-5544.)

peregriNasyon—The Ma-Yi Theatre begins its tenth season with Chris B. Millado's drama, which traces the lives of a group of Filipino migrant workers during the thirties. Previews begin Aug. 8. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 581-8896.)

The Pillars of Society—The Century Center's Ibsen series opens with a brief engagement of the playwright's drama about a hypocritical businessman. Opens Aug. 11 at 8 and continues through Aug. 23. (111 E. 15th St. 982-6782, ext. 30.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother and her virgin forty-year-old daughter, who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Cabaret—A mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical. Here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized. As the Emcee, Alan Cumming is astonishing. Jennifer Jason Leigh has the role of Sally Bowles. Directed by Sam Mendes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

Capitol Steps—The troupe of former congressional aides and interns presents its latest political-comedy revue, "Unzippin' My Doo-Dah and Other National Priorities." (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

'dentity Crisis and **Titanic**—Two one-acts by Christopher Durang, directed by Bill Coyle and Michael Reisman. (Atlantic Theatre Company Studios, 453 W. 16th St. 841-5418. Closes Aug. 8.)

Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late blues singer Dinah Washington, who is portrayed by the dynamic Yvette Freeman, trots out every blues-queen cliché in the book. But never mind: Freeman's powerful performance and evocative singing, and the general high spirits, make this a memorable evening. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

An Evening with Jerry Herman—The songwriter ("Hello, Dolly!," "Mame") stars with Lee Roy Reams and Florence Lacey in a revue of his own songs. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Falsettoland—William Finn and James Lapine's 1990 musical, in a National Asian American Theatre Company staging. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 505-3003. Closes Aug. 18.)

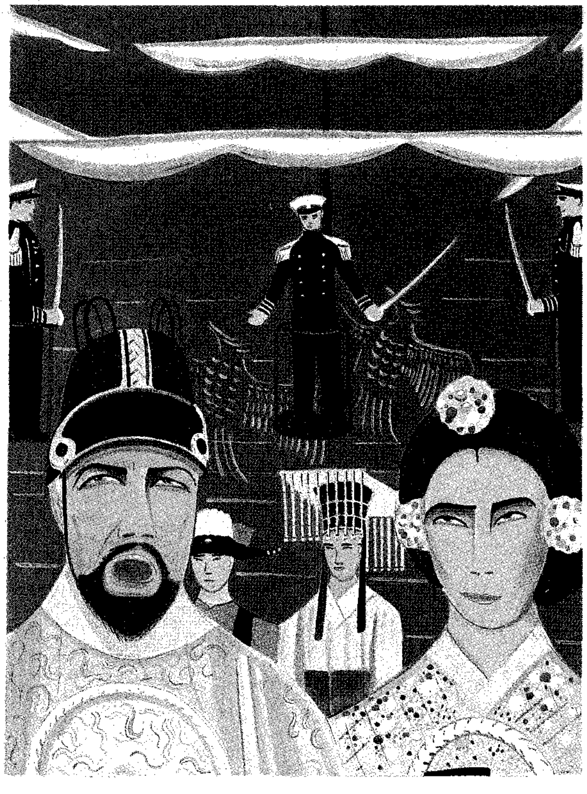
High Society—This musical, based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story" and the subsequent movie "High Society," has all the kick of flat champagne. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Ice Factory 98—The SoHo Think Tank's summer series continues with "Lonely Comet," a vaudeville detective nocturne. Aug. 6-7 at 7. The festival runs through Aug. 15. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—This revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes," is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

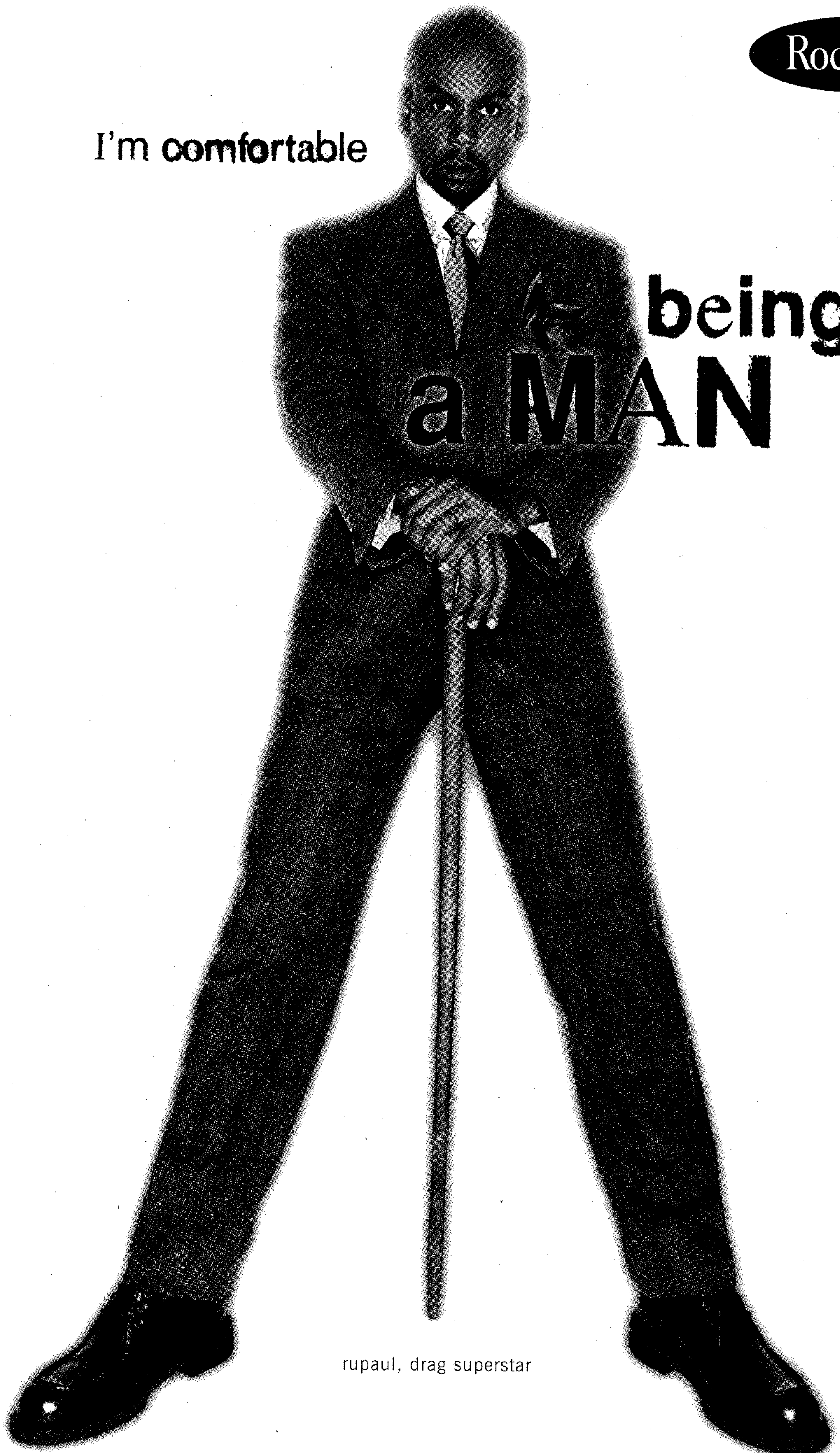
Jayson—A musical by Jeff Krell, based on his gay cartoon series. With music and lyrics by Ron Romanovsky and Paul Phillips. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 279-4200.)

The Last Empress—From Korea, a musical about the life of Queen Min of the Chosun kingdom. Performances are in Korean with English supertitles. (New York State Theatre. 307-4100.)



"The Last Empress," a musical from Korea.

GEOFFREY PARKER



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Miss Coco Peru's Liquid Universe—A heartfelt series of how-I-got-this-way vignettes written and performed by Miss Coco Peru, otherwise known as Clinton Leupp. The show is occasionally syrupy, but Miss Coco's self-aware and self-lacerating humor and her engaging way with a story make this a winning evening. Sundays at 8. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

Much Ado About Nothing—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's second offering of the summer. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575. Closes Aug. 16.)

A New Brain—Malcolm Gets is a songwriter awaiting surgery, in a new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and James Lapine. Graciela Daniele is the director. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Nunsense A-Men—An all-male version of Dan Goggin's 1985 musical comedy, "Nunsense." (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Playstation, Levels 1-4—Judy Elkan's comedy examines the days and nights of three downtown glamour girls. (Excellent Art Manufacturing, 86 Forsyth St. 414-5167.)

Power Plays—Three short plays, two written by Elaine May and one by Alan Arkin, who perform them with Jeannie Berlin and Anthony Arkin, their respective offspring. All three of the plays are too long, but the comic brilliance of May and Arkin père (who also directed) is worth, at a rough estimate, ten million times the price of admission. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Sakina's Restaurant—Aasif Mandvi portrays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Side Man—The Roundabout Theatre presents Warren Leight's drama, which was staged earlier this year Off Broadway. It's a nostalgic but never sappy paean to the musical obsession and worldly indifference of mid-century big-band musicians, cleverly structured as the recollections of one musician's put-upon son. Though the play gives short shrift to the characters, it invites the audience into the musicians' world, and the cast is good enough to make it come alive. Solidly directed by Michael Mayer. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Smoke on the Mountain—In this sweet and funny musical comedy, set on a Saturday night in June, 1938, the Mount Pleasant (North Carolina) Baptist Church awaits the arrival of the Sanders Family singers and musicians. The show features Mike Craver and Mark Hardwick's tuneful, often bluegrass-style arrangements of songs like "Bringing in the Sheaves," "I'll Fly Away," and "Rock of Ages." (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Sound of Music—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

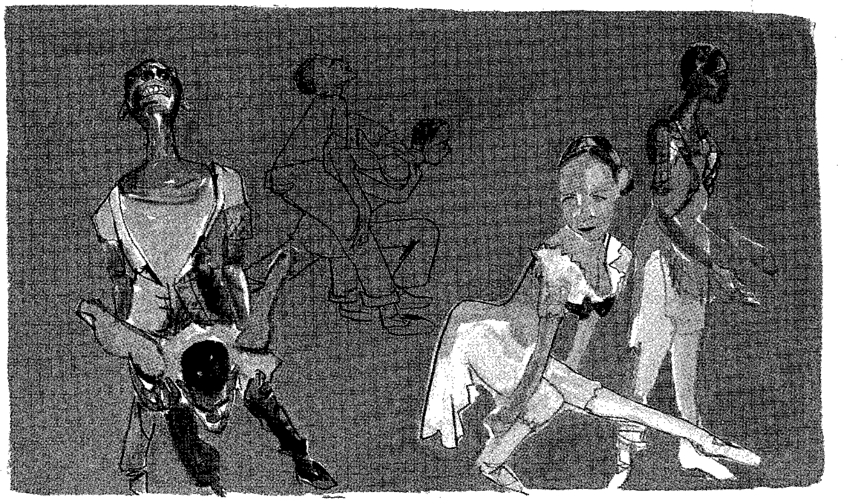
Symphonie Fantastique—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. This isn't rubber-duckie performance art; just as dance can make space a palpable presence onstage, the show's creator, Basil Twist, uses feathers, streamers, mirrors, bubbles, and sophisticated lighting to do the same for water. And, as in dance, the movement illuminates the music. A peerless, delightful summer evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Aug. 30.)

Twelfth Night—Get thee to Lincoln Center, for Nicholas Hytner's absolutely magical staging of Shakespeare's comedy. To single out any one member of the cast for praise would be wrong, and criticism would seem like nit-picking in the face of so much fun. The only real crime committed is the traditional curtain call: much of the applause is for the extraordinary work of Bob Crowley (sets), Natasha Katz (lighting), Catherine Zuber (costumes), Jeanine Tesori (music), and Scott Stauffer (sound), none of whom are there to take a bow. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 30.)

A View from the Bridge— The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Villa Villa—Theatre as mosh pit. The Argentinean troupe De La Guarda herds you into a crowded space, performs undistinguished rock music, swings on ropes over your head, and splashes you until you're drenched. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.)

You Never Can Tell—A summer treat from the Roundabout Theatre Company. In Shaw's early comedy, a young dentist (the wry and handsome Robert Sean Leonard) tries to romantically outwit an ostensibly modern turn-of-the-century woman (Katie Finneran) but ends up succumbing to her inherently old-fashioned ways. Allen Moyer's seaside-resort set is lovely, as are Michael Krass's costumes, and the cast is super. It would have been a better day at the beach, though, had the director, Nicholas Martin, toned down Catherine Kellner and Saxon Palmer, whose precocious-siblings act seems more suited to Looney Tunes. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)



Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech, at the Joyce.

GREG CHRISTIE

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. (Closes Aug. 14.) . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **R & J:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200. (On Aug. 6, the show moves to St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St.) . . . **VISITING MR. GREEN:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.

DANCE

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—Aug 7 at 8: The festival opens with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in a new, site-specific "Event." Cunningham purists consider these ninety-minute, take-no-intermission marathons as Merce at his most rarefied (cut loose from narrative, music, décor, linearity, etc.), but there are other, more accessible ways to approach the proceedings. Think of Events as recycling bins (sometimes containing material from discarded works) or trailers (previews of the next big work). Cunningham has said that Events are "a kind of vaudeville," thus suggesting that they are to be enjoyed, not parsed. (Damrosch Park. Rain date: Aug. 10.) . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 5:30: In-Young Sohn Dance Company, with Norum March Korean Drummers. (Fountain Plaza. Rain date: Aug. 12.) (For festival schedule, call the Out-of-Doors hot line, 875-5108. No tickets necessary.)

Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech—Aug. 3-4 and Aug. 7 at 8: "A Footstep of Air," "Over the Pavement," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ Aug. 5-6, Aug. 8, and Aug. 10-11 at 8: "Asia," "Re: X," "A Soldier's Tale," and "Paper Tiger." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Noche Flamenca—The premier flamenco ensemble returns to work up a sweat in its downtown stomping ground. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 279-4200. Aug. 4-8 and Aug. 11 at 8 and Aug. 9 at 3. Through Aug. 15.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Aug. 4-6 at 8, Aug. 7 at 8:30, and Aug. 8 at 2 and 8:30: American Indian Dance Theatre. . . . ¶ Aug. 6-7 at 8:15 and Aug. 8-9 at 5: Susan Marshall & Company. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

Advertisement

THE LAB OF LUXURY

The next time you go to the post office, if you see a "Wanted" poster with a picture of a black Labrador retriever on it, he's probably mine.

His name is Walter, and he has a wit, charm and personality that could probably land him his own talk show, should he be so inclined. But he has one character flaw: He's a thief.

Befitting his breed, he's always retrieved with a tireless energy bordering on obsession. But lately his retrieving has gone beyond tennis balls and authorized socks. It's more like Grand Theft—Shoe.

I should have known something was up when two or three copies of the same morning paper would appear on the lawn. I thought the paper carrier was just taking a mulligan. I didn't realize my own dog was swiping them from my now news-deprived neighbors.

He returned from a brief burst of freedom the other day, triumphantly toting one of those expensive European wooden sandals. I surmised he had stolen it off a neighbor's deck. He beamed like he'd found a Nobel Prize.

I loaded Labrador and his loot into my new Catera, intending to drive through the neighborhood to find a deck with one shoe, or worse, a neighbor wearing just one. I quickly forgot my mission. The driving was just too much fun.

THE NEWS
TRIBUNE

I had read about all the features in a newspaper ad: 200-horsepower V6 with multi-ram induction, speed-sensitive steering, traction control, on and on. But they didn't mean much until I felt them behind the wheel. My drive around the block took me way out in the country and back.

It seems odd to pass other luxury cars on two-lane highways when you're not really in a hurry to begin with. Something about Catera makes you do it anyway. Walter smiled the whole way.

As luck would have it, on my way back up my street, I spied a neighbor searching his yard, sporting the other sandal in his hand and a puzzled look.

He was less interested in my explanation than in having a long discussion about my new Catera, repeatedly asking questions about feature after feature while running his hand across the leather seating areas.†

I asked if he'd seen the newspaper ad; he had not. He said his papers kept disappearing from his lawn. Walter and I took the Fifth.

Now, all I need is to find a support group for canine kleptomaniacs. Preferably, one that's some distance from here. I won't mind the drive.

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Celebrate Brooklyn!—Aug. 5 at noon: Philip Johnston's Transparent Quartet. This unit may not be as boisterous as Johnston's late, lamented Microscopic Septet, but his distinctive writing and exacting soprano-saxophone work still thrive in it. (Borough Hall Plaza, Court St. at Remsen St.) . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 7:30: The Black Rock Coalition Orchestra plays funk from the "Blaxploitation Songbook," featuring music from "Shaft," "Superfly," "Foxy Brown," and "Trouble Man." . . . ¶ Aug. 8 starting at 10 A.M.: The Boricua Festival, with Ray Barretto and his Orchestra, the Boricua Ensemble with William Cepeda, and Yomo Toro. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. No tickets necessary.)

The Verve, at the Hammerstein Ballroom.

HIROSHI TANABE

H.O.R.D.E. Festival—This year's estrogen-challenged alternative to Lilith Fair features the harmonica-driven swagger of Blues Traveler (who founded the festival), retro-rocker Ben Harper, Barenaked Ladies (now enjoying their first hit single, "One Week"), and two fine female defectors: Grammy winner Paula Cole and sultry diva-in-training Alana Davis. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. Aug. 5 at 4:30.)

The Verve—Fronted by the alarmingly cheek-boned "Mad" Richard Ashcroft, the Verve presents a variation on the Oasis archetype: a swaggering, handsome singer backed by a muscular, faceless band. But unlike Oasis, the Verve trusts its feminine side. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Aug. 5 at 8.)

Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown—He's past seventy, but you'd never know it from his sinewy sound. Like virtually every other Texas blues guitarist of the last half-century, he owes much to T-Bone Walker, but unlike his fellow-disciples he's always sought to expand the vocabulary of the blues, mixing in elements of country, Cajun, and jazz. And, when he picks up that electric fiddle, watch out. (MetroTech Commons, Flatbush Ave. at Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn. Aug. 6 at noon. No tickets necessary.)

Tori Amos—The fiery piano banshee, in a solo performance. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Aug. 6 at 8.)

Ray Charles—Brother Ray is an institution now, so we tend to forget that if he hadn't come along and just about single-handedly invented it, soul music as we know it would probably not exist. Say "Amen, baby." (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 6 at 8.)

Jimmy Buffett—The too laid-back margarita man sings love songs to his Parrotheads. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 6 at 8.)

Linton Kwesi Johnson / Tracie Morris with Vernon Reid—Poetry in the Park: the reggae dub master Johnson spins political and social commentary, and the performance poet Morris collaborates with guitarist Reid. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. Aug. 6 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

Claude (Fiddler) Williams—Ninety years old and still playing like a demon, Williams was there when swing started—he played with Andy Kirk, Nat Cole, and Count Basie's band in the thirties—and the feel for propulsive rhythm is embedded in his bones. Part of the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors festival. (North Plaza. Aug. 7 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Dar Williams / Toshi Reagon and Big Lovely—In the dark, dreary days between Suzanne Vega and Jewel, hundreds of folkies and neo-folkies toiled in commercial obscurity, playing unpopular, unfashionable music to spiky-haired thugs in noisy beer halls. Williams is one of the best of that lot. The Massachusetts-based singer avoids posing and platitudes and instead weaves richly ambiguous and complex narratives. / The fierce and uncompromising Reagon does celebratory shows—showers of retro funk, urban blues, and folk, all sung with evangelical fervor. To hear her is to believe. (Central Park SummerStage. Aug. 8 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

Sonny Rollins—With tenor titan Rollins, you pays your money and you takes your chances. When the planets are aligned, he easily proves he's the most commanding improviser in jazz; when the cosmic balance is off, he is, too, and few experiences can be so frustrating. Yet he's still not to be missed, particularly in an outdoor setting, where his very tone—massive and assured no matter what it's used for—can be a revelation. Part of the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors festival. (Damrosch Park. Aug. 8 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Badar Ali Khan / Abida Parveen / Junoon—After the untimely death of the great Pakistani devotional singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (a hero to such disparate stars as Eddie Vedder and Peter Gabriel), the torch has been passed to the master's young cousin Badar, whose soaring tenor often worked as filigree to Nusrat's mountainous lower register. He's quickly becoming accustomed to the world-music spotlight. With Parveen, one of Pakistan's best-known vocalists, and the rock band Junoon. (Central Park SummerStage. Aug. 9 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

Deep Purple / ELP—In what may be the summer's most bizarre nostalgia-driven double bill, the bluesy, rough-and-tumble rock band meets the pompous, orchestral-leaning trio. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 9 at 7:30.)

Monty Alexander Trio—The prodigious Jamaican pianist swings under the stars. Part of the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors festival. (North Plaza. Aug. 11 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **LAINIE KAZAN** is at work in the Oak Room through Aug. 22. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Aug. 5-8: The **STANLEY TURRENTINE** quintet. You judge a tenor saxophonist like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his invention but by his sound—in this case, a huge, rounded calling card of sonic warmth and gritty soul. He's recently pledged further allegiance to his jazz roots, and, cleansed of his commercialism, he's making quite a showing. Aug. 9: A guitarist's guitarist, **JACK WILKINS** is a New York secret worth blabbing about. Jazz guitar brings out the sprinter in too many players; Wilkins thankfully takes the long way home most of the time. Aug. 10: The **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. Aug. 11: The drummer **CHARLI PERSIP** and his band **SUPERSOUND**. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Aug. 9: Bossa-nova legend **SERGIO MENDES AND BRASIL '99**. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Pianist **MONTY ALEXANDER** and his trio are in through Aug. 9. Mondays belong to guitarist **LES PAUL**.

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Aug. 8: The **FRANK MORGAN** quartet. The classical alto saxophonist Morgan combines the rhythmic ethos of Charlie Parker with the languid sonority of Johnny Hodges, and he produces solos that honor both the bop he grew up with and the swing he obviously reveres. He doesn't get to town that often, so drop by and welcome him back.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Aug. 9: **TERRY RILEY**, with **KRISHNA BHATT** and **GEORGE BROOKS**. Riley's 1964 masterwork "In C" is generally considered the starting point for modern minimalism; he has continued on his own spare but lyrical way since then. Here he blends his minimalism with the raga stylings of sitarist Bhatt and the saxophone work of Brooks.

Red Blazer, 32 W. 37th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to the Big Apple Jazz Band, with Dick Voigt, and Saturdays to the Bob Cantwell quintet.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Aug. 9: The accomplished soprano saxophonist **JANE IRA BLOOM** too often has her head in the clouds; wispiness can alternate with electronically enhanced sonic blotches to cancel out the logic and lyricism of her best work. Lately, though, she's been surrounding herself with vigorous players who have helped her balance her cerebral tendencies with some grit. Dining.

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Aug. 6: A mainstay of the city's new jazz scene, saxophonist **TIM BERNE** makes music out of a skewed language all his own—fractured yet lyrical, scrupulously formal yet edgy with vitality. Aug. 7: The Brazilian percussionist **CYRO BAPTISTA** and his ensemble **BEAT THE DONKEY**.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The **WYCLIFFE GORDON** quartet is in through Aug. 9. As a Wynton Marsalis band graduate, trombonist Gordon surely has the requisite reverence for his Southern roots and for the hallowed status his instrument enjoys in the jazz tradition. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Aug. 5-8: With a kicking tone and the kind of energy known only to the ambitious, the extravagant tenor saxophonist **ERIC ALEXANDER** is a real comer; the equally prodigal pianist **JOHN HICKS** can still sound like he's sowing his youthful oats some four decades into his career.

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Aug. 7-8: A musicians-only lineup, featuring former members of Living Colour: guitarist **VERNON REID**, drummer **WILL CALHOUN**, and bassist **DOUG WIMBISH**. Aug. 11: **MARC RIBOT Y LOS CUBANOS POSTIZOS**. Tracing the stylistic trajectory of guitarist Ribot's career as he flits from jazz to pop to ethnic musics and back again offers little in the way of evolutionary logic. That he's now obsessed with putting a postmodern spin on classic Cuban music should be accepted and enjoyed rather than understood.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Aug. 5: The downtown all-women funk outfit **HOMER EROTIC**. Aug. 7: Radio-friendly pop with **FASTBALL**. Aug. 8: The "suave and sybaritic" (by their own description) **COMBUSTIBLE EDISON**, whose music is a kitschy libation consisting of equal parts vibraphone, Farfisa organ, melodica, bossa-nova bongos, surf guitar (played by a besuited James Bond type called the Millionaire), and torchy vocals courtesy of Miss Lily Banquette.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Aug. 11: **GRANT LEE BUFFALO.** With its brilliant (and shockingly underreviewed) fourth album, "Jubilee," about to break through to listeners—its glorious single, "Truly, Truly," is rapidly becoming a radio hit—Michael Stipe's favorite band now hits the road with the abandon that its burly American rock sound demands. Lead singer-songwriter Grant Lee Phillips's muscular guitar playing and tender, falsettolike singing can turn any auditorium into an echo-drenched cathedral of sound. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—In the seventies, while at the helm of the Modern Lovers, the warbly-voiced troubadour **JONATHAN RICHMAN** (Aug. 6-7) was celebrating the pleasures of dorm life long before college rock became a viable marketing concept; today, his cameo as a wandering minstrel in the sweetly sophomoric "There's Something About Mary" is winning him a new cadre of fans. It's about time; the quarter century in between has given Richman plenty of time to perfect multiple sets of indie-folk vignettes that celebrate a coy mixture of worldliness and naïveté as the surest way to a young girl's heart. Aug. 8: **THE SKATALITES.**

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-4064)—The beloved living room of indie-rock is back, thank God. Aug. 7: With its fractured English and little-boy-lost-in-a-watch-factory sound, **BLONDE REDHEAD** seems to have taken a detour through Ionesco on the way to the fuzz box. The New York-based quartet (two Japanese women and twin Italian brothers) has overcome the language barrier—and a heavy debt to Sonic Youth's "Daydream Nation"—to become darlings of the local scene. Aug. 8: **JONATHAN RICHMAN.** (See the Knitting Factory.)

Badar Ali Khan, at SummerStage.

RUSSELL CHRISTIAN

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Aug. 11: Singer-songwriter **WILLIE NILE,** a wee dynamo in the Dylansteen mold. With singer-guitarist **JACK MC KEEVER** and his band.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Aug. 5: **KING CHANGO** plays a raucous froth of Argentinean rock, punk, and ska. Aug. 6: **BASEMENT BHANGRA,** an evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music from the Punjab via underground London. Zydeco accordion legend **BOOZOO CHAVIS** brings the sounds of the bayou by on Aug. 7. Bahian diva **JULIANA AQUINO** lights up Aug. 8. Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof." The only problem with the sculpture garden on the roof of the Met is that the works on display are pitted against the magnificent Manhattan skyline. But the soaring trapezoids and hovering arcs of Kelly's sculptures—spare, uninflected, and resolutely planar—elegantly hold their own. The main subject here seems to be the sky, which on a clear, crisp day is tinted a Kelly blue. Three of the five pieces on display (through late fall) are recent works that have never before been exhibited publicly. . . . ¶ The French designer Jean Dunand (1877-1942) richly deserves the moniker the Met has bestowed on him in this mini-retrospective: "Master of Art Deco." When F. Scott Fitzgerald said wistfully that he loved the world when it twinkles, he might have been thinking of Dunand's stunning screens, created for the salon of Solomon Guggenheim, which depict angels falling from Heaven, in gilt lacquer speckled with mother-of-pearl and eggshell. The bedroom suite (in silver-and-black lacquer and furry goatskin) that he designed for Templeton Crocker's penthouse apartment in San Francisco is the real-life inspiration for all those swanky interiors that Fred Astaire swivelled through in the days before anyone thought this style was camp. Through Oct. 25. . . . ¶ "Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer," a splendid survey devoted to this preëminent Pre-Raphaelite, includes paintings, works on paper, books, stained glass, and tapestries that Burne-Jones executed in collaboration with his friend William Morris. Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The first New York retrospective devoted to Pierre Bonnard in thirty years. Through Oct. 13. (See also Galleries—Uptown.) . . . ¶ "Love Forever: Yayoi Kusama, 1958-68." Like Yoko Ono, Kusama was a refugee from an affluent Japanese family who sought encouragement for her artistic ambitions in New York's avant-garde in the sixties. Kusama's early "infinity net" paintings found supporters in the masculine precincts ruled by such abstractionists as Donald Judd and Frank Stella, but the artist's more extreme, performance-oriented gestures—like appearing nude in many of her pieces—linked her with the radicals of that scene. In this show, which is strong on paintings, objects, and archival materials, Kusama looks like one of those seminal artists who was years ahead of her time. Some of this is due to a shift in art-world fashion, which is currently obsessed with gender, the body, and performance, but there is no doubting the bravery of Kusama's achievement. (See also Uptown and Downtown gallery listings.) Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor." Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ The impressive retrospective of Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) is valuable as much for its insights into the rise and decline of the Russian Revolution as for its art-historical contribution. A leader of the avant-garde in the twenties, Rodchenko was a founder of Constructivism, an early—and very witty—practitioner of photocollage, and a brilliant graphic designer. The works from the teens and early twenties radiate a purist's idealism, which is as evident in the artist's letterhead design for the new state airline as it is in his black-on-black and white-on-white abstractions. Photocollage led to photojournalism, and Rodchenko's grainy, eerily composed shots of daily life and work in Moscow are rich in ironies, political as well as artistic. The most powerful document is a 1933 magazine photo essay about the building of a canal, which purports to show the intrinsic heroism of hard work. In fact, it depicts the first of Stalin's gulags, in which some two hundred thousand people died. Through Oct. 6. . . . ¶ "David Goldblatt: Photographs from South Africa." Through Oct. 6. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—It would be easy to dismiss the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916) as a reactionary purveyor of genre scenes: the echoes of Vermeer and de Hooch in his gray, deserted street scenes and empty rooms are all too obvious. Yet Hammershøi is very much a man of his own time. A chilly, bare interior of an elegant baroque palace hall (1909) speaks of the dawning of conscious alienation in the early twentieth century as powerfully as the works of Hammershøi's contemporaries in Paris expressed the era's idealism. Through Sept. 7. . . . ¶ "The Art of the Motorcycle," a dazzling collection of a hundred and eleven bikes, from the late nineteenth century to the present. The installation, designed by Frank Gehry, is itself a work of art: the architect has faced the ramps of the rotunda with stainless steel, giving a hallucinatory shimmer to Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece. The show might be summarized in one word: bitchin'. Through Sept. 20. . . . ¶ "Peggy Guggenheim: A Centennial Celebration." Through Sept. 2. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"The Hugo Boss Prize, 1998." The lineup of finalists for the fifty-thousand-dollar award is multinational and multicultural: Lorna Simpson from the United States, William Kentridge from South Africa, Lee Bul from South Korea, Pipilotti Rist from Switzerland, Huang Yong Ping from China, and the winner, Douglas Gordon from Scotland. Most of the work on view, however, is familiar enough to gallery-goers, and it seems considerably less transgressive than one might have imagined. The show does confirm certain trends in recent art: a vaguely politicized undercurrent and the continuing reliance on installation, film, and video. Through Sept. 20. . . . ¶ Four video installations ("Bronx," "Roma," "Liquid Crystals," and "Baroque Cathodic Movements") by the Venetian artist Fabrizio Plessi. Through Sept. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A mid-career retrospective of Charles Ray, one of the most discreet yet powerful artists to emerge from the raucous L.A. art scene. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "Unknown Terrain: The Landscapes of Andrew Wyeth." Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through Aug. 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Dahesh Museum, 601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—"Image and Text: Orientalist Works from the Permanent Collection" showcases the nineteenth-century obsession with Eastern exotica: pashas, sheiks, serpent charmers, horse dealers, harem guards, Moorish bathers, a Turkish lover cutting his arm before his mistress to prove his love, and other artistic approximations of the day. Through Sept. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—"School Uniforms: A Hot Topic!" presents the latest suggestions of F.I.T. design students for fetching scholastic apparel, including fleece tops and vinyl stretch pants, cowboy sportswear, and Ultrasuede-jacket-and-bike-short ensembles. Through Aug. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (832-1155)—"Shiko Munakata: The Modern Master of the Woodblock" presents the bold, black ink work of the printmaker, including "Ten Disciples of Buddha" and "Eulogy to Flower Hunting." Through Aug. 16. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St. (977-7170)—"The Art and Life of Folk Artist Mary Ann Willson." A small collection of brightly colored, largely biblical fantasias that constitute half of the remaining examples of the work of the nineteenth-century rural artist, whose romantic attachment to a "farmer maid" inspired the novel "Patience and Sarah," as well as the recent Lincoln Center opera. Through Sept. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"Half Past Autumn: The Art of Gordon Parks" supplements a retrospective devoted to the work of the New York photojournalist with samples of his efforts in other arenas, including poetry, novels, film, and music. Through Nov. 1. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway (219-1222)—"Urban Encounters" documents activist art on the Lower East Side since 1980 with examples from such practitioners as the Guerrilla Girls (anti-gender bias, pro-diversity), ABC No Rio (anti-Koch, pro-squatters), and REPOhistory (dedicated to memorializing earlier political movements with street signs and demonstrations). Through Sept. 20. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"A War in Perspective, 1898-1998: Public Appeals, Memory, and the Spanish-American Conflict" examines the clashing ideologies and the divergent aftermaths for two world powers. Salomon Room; through Aug. 29. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947)—Most of the drawings in this mixed exhibition are rough, throwaway sketches, except for a series of studies for a children's book, which exert an irresistible charm, and a suite of music-hall caricatures, from 1893, that possess all the vibrant energy of Lautrec's work from the same era and milieu. An exquisite still-life of a vase of flowers, painted in 1930, reminds us why we care about this artist: the vivid splash of one crimson bloom anchors a symphony of whites, magically evoking a simultaneous mood of sadness and tranquillity. Through Oct. 10. (Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. 879-0500.)

Shirley Goldfarb (1925-80)—An American painter who lived in Paris the last thirty years of her life, Goldfarb was almost unknown in her native country during her lifetime; this exhibition suggests that we missed out on an interesting career. Influenced both by the color-field school and by French conceptual painters such as Yves Klein, she worked with a palette knife to apply pure color in ways that invite intellection even as they beguile the eye. A huge blue canvas, from 1970, has the retinal impact of a work by Klein, but, with its carefully incised knife lines laid out in a methodical grid, the painting is closer in spirit to minimalist drawings by Cy Twombly and his contemporaries. And "Lime & Purple" has many more colors than that, smeared in thumb-size swatches, like cross-sections of Venetian-glass paperweights. Through Sept. 4. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

"Food for Thought"—Art about comestibles, by Milton Avery, Isabel Bishop, Roz Chast, Janet Fish, Jacob Lawrence, and Wayne Thiebaud, among others. Through Aug. 12. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

"On Paper"—Works in many mediums by twenty-two artists from the past fifty years. There are striking contrasts: a totemic abstraction by Robert Motherwell, executed in a few deft strokes, and a laborious cartoon of a circus scene by Victor Vasarely before he Op'ed out. Ellen Levy's "Paper Clips and Terriers" is a complex composition in charcoal and ink spray which creates a pattern of abstract monumentality reminiscent of a Piranesi prison interior. Helen Frankenthaler's abstract monotype, of what look like lumpy female bathers, has an uncharacteristically goofy charm. Carlo Maria Mariani's large drawing of a classical female head, rendered in pencil and pastel with an almost Ingres-esque precision, sprouting a pair of coral antlers in watercolor, mocks the very conventions of the traditional finished drawing that it masters. Through Aug. 28. (Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510.)

Recent Acquisitions—The Warhols are the standouts in this themeless summer show of contemporary American masters, particularly some whimsical drawings from the late fifties, before the artist found (and founded) Pop. "Elf," deftly executed in broken ink lines and brightened up with gold leaf, exudes eccentric charm. A pair of classic Pop boxes, "Del Monte Peach Halves" and "Campbell's Tomato Juice," from 1964, are wrought with a craftsmanlike care that seems almost touching compared with the later, deliberately sloppy "Mao" and "Single Dollar Sign." The exhibition also includes a fine trio of pencil drawings by Larry Rivers, illustrating Jack Kerouac's "The Lonesome Traveller," and a witty cartoon of a hippopotamus, by Ellsworth Kelly. Through Sept. 12. (Sheehan, 20 W. 57th St. 489-3331.)

Short List—**Joan Brown,** Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through Aug. 14. . . . **Yayoi Kusama** and **Robert Filliou,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Both shows through Aug. 7. . . . **Shari Mendelson,** St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200. Through Aug. 24.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

"Small Paintings"—Niche work, if you can get it, by Ingo Meller, Richmond Burton, Joan Mitchell, Juan Uslé, and others. Through Aug 28. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List—**Vinnie Angel,** Kravets/Wehby, 529 W. 21st St. 352-2238. Through Aug. 28. . . . **Jenny Watson,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Aug. 14.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Chris Johanson—Lilliputian figures skulk down backstreets throughout this series of painted junk-pile constructions that owe more to back-yard forts than to Red Grooms. With just a few shaky lines scrawled on doors and boards, the San Francisco-based artist evokes inner-city decay and claustrophobia, but the heavy-handed writing (literally on the walls) about "vibes" and "trips" can jar you out of an otherwise charming Gulliver-like experience. Through Aug. 15. (Alleged, 28 Prince St. 966-4707.)

Yayoi Kusama—An exhibition of early works on paper by this protean, delicately gifted Japanese artist strengthens her steadily rising reputation. Dating to the early fifties, before Kusama came to New York, these small-format drawings range impressively from austere fields of black ink dots to brilliantly colored gouaches that hover between abstraction and figuration. Through Sept. 30. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Great Lakes

The August exodus from the city has begun—which means, for many of us, going back to the same woods, cabins, and docks where the family has gone for as long as anyone can remember.

E. B. White's "Once More to the Lake," perhaps the finest essay on America's summer affair with the lake, was rereleased last year in his collection **One Man's Meat** (Tilbury House). Returning to the Maine lake he knew as a child, White worried that time would have altered "the coves and streams, the hills that the sun set behind, the camps and the paths behind the camps." But he found that although he had changed much had remained the same: "Pattern of life indelible, the fadeproof lake, the woods unshatterable, the pasture with the sweetfern and the juniper forever and ever, summer without end."

ELIZA GRAN

Not surprisingly, many singers of the lake have been poets, including—most famously—Sir Walter Scott ("The Lady of the Lake"), W. B. Yeats ("The Lake Isle of Innisfree"), and William Wordsworth ("Preludes"). For those who like a little spice with their odes, a quietly smoldering new biography by Kenneth R. Johnston, **The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy** (Norton), reveals that the Lake Poet's life was marked by a good deal more emotional turbulence—including jealousy and lust—than tranquillity.

Two new books of fiction have lakeside settings. Mark Slouka, in his dreamy yet sharp-edged **Lost Lake** (Knopf), tells twelve stories about the summer bonds and betrayals of a community of Czech-Americans. Elinor Lipman's sharply drawn comedy of manners, **The Inn at Lake Devine** (Random House), turns an all-Wasp Vermont resort into a proving ground for a young Jewish girl's ambitions. "The Inn at Lake Devine" is the perfect novel to read in the hammock or on the porch. If you start reading it right after lunch, you can finish before the golden late-afternoon light starts spilling over the water.

Books.

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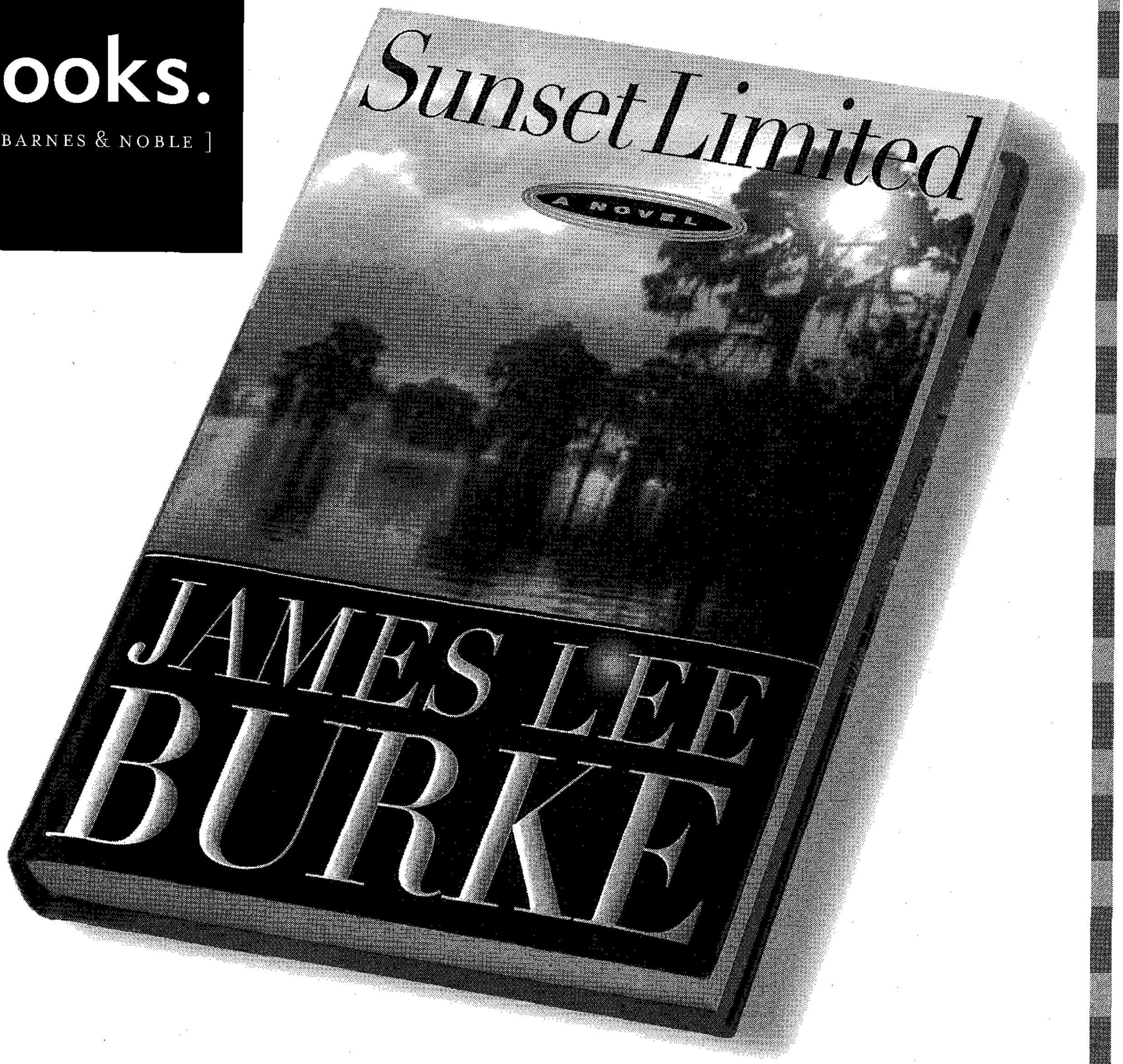

SUNSET LIMITED

by James Lee Burke

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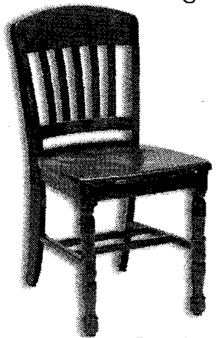
"[He] sat down in a wood chair facing the door, the shotgun across his knees. 'This better come out right,' he said."



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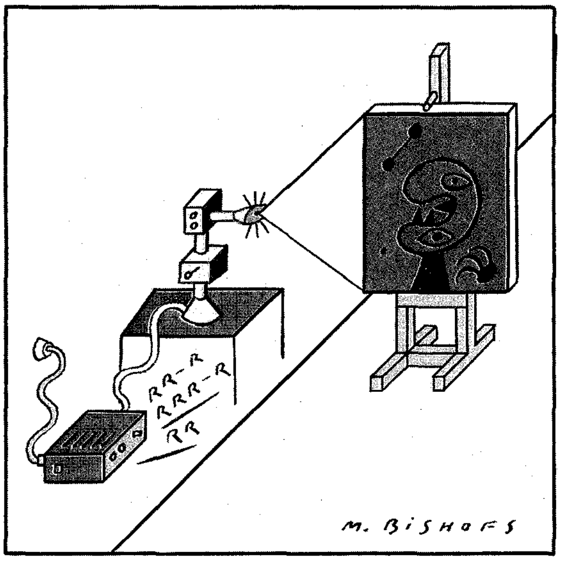
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Schreiber (1904-77) and **Fred Shane** (1906-90)—Two artists associated with Thomas Hart Benton and the American Regionalism movement visited L.A. during the thirties and forties, where they wittily observed the bizarre confluence of the glamorous and the banal. In Shane's tempera "Movie Props" (1945), two crewmen pause for lunch on the back lot, surrounded by a Roman chariot, a Venetian gondola, the half-timbered façade of a Norman house, and two monumental sculptures of pagan idols. Schreiber's watercolor of the Warner Bros. studio canteen, tingling with colorful life, shows Bogart, Lombard, and Lubitsch chowing down with bit players in costume and a terrifying caricature of Hedda Hopper, in whose hands a teacup is a deadly weapon. Through Aug. 27. (Teller, 568 Broadway. 941-7335.)

"Maps"—The world is a many-media'd thing, from James Turrell's wall-size topographical rendering of an earthwork project in which he reshaped the rim of an extinct volcano in Arizona to a tiny, enigmatic pair of black-and-white Warhol paintings that mapped Soviet missile bases in 1985. Jasper Johns is here, of course, represented by a mid-sixties lithograph of his iconic image of the contiguous forty-eight. A folkish embroidery of the world by Alighiero e Boetti fills in each country's space with a rendering of its flag; Eastern Europe and West Africa are tricky, and the great red glob of the U.S.S.R. with hammer and sickle already looks quaint. Buckminster Fuller's "Dymaxion Air-Ocean World Map" is as dry as its title but claims to be the first two-dimensional cartographical representation of the world in which the entire surface of the Earth can be viewed without distortion. Through Aug. 28. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219.)

Group Show—Black and gray dominate this summer show: a recent David Salle mixes, with what might pass for wit, images of a snare drum, a giant rabbit, a woman shading her eyes from the sun, and a Ferragamo window display. Robert Rauschenberg's "Philosopher's Night Circus," unified by a black acrylic-and-enamel ground, creepily conveys an atmosphere of insomniac despair. Against these paintings and an elegant pattern piece by Philip Taaffe, the pair of David Smith constructions, dating to the early sixties, strike an incongruously noble note. Through Aug. 28. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)



Short List—**ann lovett,** Dorsky, 379 Broadway. 966-6170. Through Aug. 28. . . . **alison moritsugu,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through Aug. 15. . . . **tobias rehberger,** Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466. Through Aug. 28.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Color"—Works by gallery artists Lynn Davis, Sally Mann, and Victor Schrager and guest artists Christopher Bucklow, Adam Fuss, and Dana Hoey. Through Aug. 14. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

"Drive-Ins: Disappearing Summer Cinema"—Featuring works by Jeff Brouws, Lee Friedlander, Richard Misrach, Andrew Moore, Lynn Saville, and Hiroshi Sugimoto. Through Aug. 7. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"Neighborhood Watch"—Diverse takes on suburbia from Gregory Crewdson, Roe Etheridge, Arne Svenson, and others. Through Aug. 14. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

"Ship/Shape"—Nautical imagery by such European and American photographers as Doris Ulmann, Edward Steichen, Harold Costain, and Edward Prince of Wales. Through Aug. 29. (DeLellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Closed Tuesdays.)

"Summer Salon V (Pictures We Like)"—Featuring photographs by Sylvia Plachy, Adam Baer, William Gottlieb, and Lissie Habie. Through Aug. 28. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

"A Summer Wedding"—Works by a broad range of artists, including Donna Ferrato, Charles Harbutt, Bruce Davidson, Andy Marcus, Mary Ellen Mark, and Edward Keating. Through Aug. 8. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

"Sur la Tête"—Pictures that take the head as a focal point, by Edouard Boubat, Mario Cravo Neto, Michael von Graffenreid, and Graciela Iturbide. Through Aug. 28. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510.)

"Take the A Train"—A very large compendium of mostly black-and-white shots of the subways and trains of New York City by such photographers as Louis Faurer, William Klein, Louis Stettner, Walker Evans, Danny Lyon, and Helen Levitt. Through Aug. 14. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"Walker Evans: The MoMA Murals"/"Counter Culture: The Diner in America"—Six mural-size prints made by the photographer for his 1971 museum retrospective. / Works by, among others, Garry Winogrand, William Klein, Weegee, and Ray K. Metzker. Both shows through Aug. 21. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

"Women Travellers"—Works by nine adventurers, including Leah Demchick, Marina Karella, Marcia Lippman, and Mai Duong. Through Sept. 5. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.)

International Center of Photography—"Comparative Concepts: Photographs by August Sander, Karl Blossfeldt, Albert Renger-Patzsch, and Bernd and Hilla Becher." Through Sept. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Mathew Brady's Portraits: Images As History, Photography As Art," a travelling show of more than a hundred daguerreotypes, albumen prints, "Imperial" salted-paper prints, and cartes de visite. Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "A Bronx Family Album: The Impact of AIDS, by Steve Hart." Through Sept. 6. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**herman costa,** *Ricco/Maresca, 529* W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Aug. 14. . . . **lucien hervé,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Aug. 14. . . . **michael kenna,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Aug. 14. . . . **nina korhonen,** SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Through Aug. 31. . . . **alexander rodchenko,** Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363. Through Aug. 14. *(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of the City of New York.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

New York Grand Opera—*In the final performance* of the company's season, and the eighteenth in its seven-year survey of all of Verdi's operas, Vincent La Selva conducts "Il Trovatore," fully staged, with soprano Francesca Accurso, mezzo-soprano Marisa Galvany, tenor Enrico Di Giuseppe, and baritone Ping Yu heading the cast. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. Aug. 5 at 7:30. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 245-8837.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Mostly Mozart—Aug. 5 at 8: Louis Langree conducts the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Haydn's "La Isola Disabitata" Overture and D-Major Piano Concerto (featuring Leif Ove Andsnes), in addition to Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 (with Joshua Bell) and Symphony No. 40. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Aug. 6 at 8: Kremerata Baltica, an ensemble of twenty-six young Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian string players, performs under the direction of its eponym, the violinist Gidon Kremer, who will be the featured soloist in Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." Pärt's "Fratres," Nino Rota's Concerto for Strings, and Piazzolla's "Tango Ballet" complete the program. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . Aug. 7-8 at 8: Vladimir Spivakov leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Strauss's "Capriccio" Overture, as well as numerous pieces by *Mozart: his Symphony No. 24, Sinfonia* Concertante (K. 364, with Mr. Spivakov as violinist and Paul Neubauer as violist), and several arias (featuring soprano Inva Mula). (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 3: In its American début, the eminent period-instrument group Concerto Köln offers a symphony by Francesco Antonio Rosetti, Mozart's F-Major Piano Concerto (featuring Malcolm Bilson) and Symphony No. 29, and Vivaldi's motet "Nisi Dominus" (with contralto Nathalie Stutzmann). (Alice Tully Hall.) . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 8: The Tokyo String Quartet plays Beethoven's Quartet in E Minor (Op. 59, No. 2), flutist Marina Piccinini assists in Beethoven's D-Major Serenade (Op. 25), and clarinettist Sharon Kam is spotlighted in Weber's Clarinet Quintet. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 8: Ivor Bolton leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Mozart's Overture to "Der Schauspieldirektor," his Violin Concerto No. 3 (with Christian Tetzlaff), and his Symphony No. 34; mezzo-soprano Susan Graham is the soloist in arias by Handel and Mozart. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . **note:** Pre-concert recitals, open to ticket holders, begin an hour before each concert. . . . **note, too:** On most evenings at 6, in Alice Tully Hall, Mostly Mozart is presenting a series of hour-long concerts given over to the endlessly inventive quartets of Haydn. This week's installments are performed by the Emperor String Quartet (Aug. 5), Vellinger String Quartet (Aug. 6-7), St. Lawrence String Quartet (Aug. 8), and Amernet String Quartet (Aug. 11). (For information about tickets for all Mostly Mozart events, call 721-6500.)

Andrea Bocelli—The tenor, who has succeeded pianist David Helfgott as this year's "classical" pop sensation, offers a recital of songs and arias, with the Pittsburgh Symphony, conducted by Steven Mercurio, providing the backup. (Madison Square Garden. Aug. 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 307-7171.)

Dennis Keene Choral Festival—Mr. Keene, best *known to New York's concertgoers as the di*rector of the Ascension Music concerts, has founded a new choral institute in Kent, Connecticut; his goal is to provide a venue where aspiring choral professionals can work with some of the field's leading professionals—a time-honored setup for summering instrumentalists at places like Tanglewood, Aspen, Banff, and Schleswig-Holstein, but apparently without precedent in the world of choral singing and directing. The participants take a break from their bucolic surroundings to

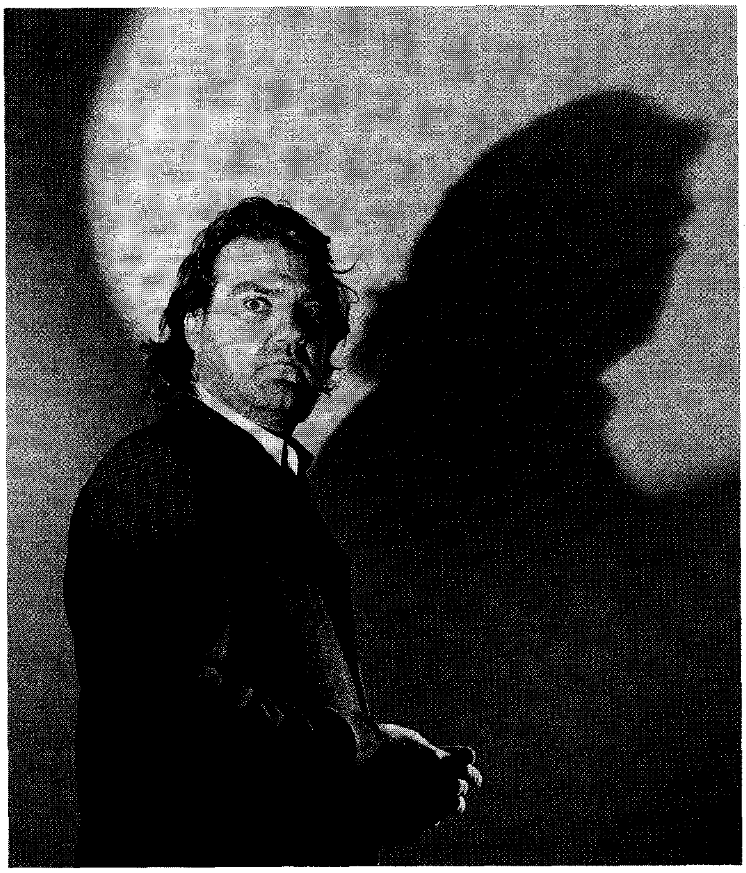
MARIS BISHOFS

travel to New York for a performance of Bach's B-Minor Mass, with Mr. Keene directing and with soloists Judith Pannill (soprano), Christina Wilcox (mezzo-soprano), Steven Tharp (tenor), and Philip Cutlip (baritone). (Alice Tully Hall. Aug. 9 at 7:30. For information about tickets to this concert and to the institute's performances in Kent, Conn., call 800-637-5198.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—Aug. 6 at 7:30 and Aug. 9 at 4: Presenting Milhaud's Suite for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano; Brahms's F-Minor Clarinet Sonata; and Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 7:30: Beethoven's G-Major Violin Sonata (Op. 30, No. 3), Debussy's Cello Sonata, and Brahms's Piano Trio in C Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Summergarden—Though it projects a relaxing visual aesthetic, the Museum of Modern Art's outdoor sculpture garden can offer a challenge to the ears, given its proximity to midtown traffic. Nonetheless, the free modern-music programs presented here every summer by Juilliard performers are so stimulating that listeners accept the background hubbub with minimal grumbling (and at these prices, who can really complain?). Still, listeners in the know will arrive early to secure seats near the stage for this week's programs, in which soprano Lauren Skuce and pianist Joel Sachs (the series's organizer) offer a variety of vocal works, including Broadway numbers by Rodgers and Bernstein, experimental pieces by Cage and Babbitt, and art-song cycles by John Musto, Robert Beaser, and Jack Beeson (a première). (14 W. 54th St. Aug. 7-8 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)



Baritone Bryn Terfel, appearing in recital at Tanglewood.

DUDLEY REED

Richard Kogan—Performing piano music by Debussy, Chopin, Gershwin, and others. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. Aug. 9 at noon. For information about tickets, call 718-885-2478.)

Meng-chieh Liu—Pianist, performing two different programs. Aug. 9 at 6 and 8: A mostly Chopin concert. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 8: Barber's Sonata, plus several of Chopin's Nocturnes. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. No tickets necessary.)

Wihan String Quartet—The Czech foursome, established a decade ago at the Prague Academy of Arts, performs quartets by Beethoven (in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3), Schubert (in E-Flat Major, D. 87), and Dvořák (in E-Flat Major, Op. 51). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Aug. 11 at 5:45.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—Aug. 5 at 8:30: Violinist Gidon Kremer leads his string ensemble, Kremerata Baltica, in Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," Pärt's "Fratres," Nino Rota's Concerto for Strings, and Piazzolla's "Tango Ballet." . . . ¶ Aug. 6 at 8:30: In the opening concert of Tanglewood's annual Festival of Contemporary Music, the Arditti String Quartet plays quartets by Nancarrow (his Third), Carter (his Fifth), Kagel (his Fourth), and Dutilleux ("Ainsi la Nuit"), the last two serving as the festival's composers in residence. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 8:30: Trevor Pinnock conducts the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and members of the Boston Symphony in works by Handel, Vivaldi, and Haydn (his "Mass in Time of War"). . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 8:30: Tenor Neil Shicoff and baritone Bryn Terfel are the soloists in an evening of operatic and Broadway excerpts, with Seiji Ozawa conducting the Boston Symphony and Tanglewood Festival Chorus. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 2:30: Mr. Ozawa and the Boston Symphony perform Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune," Dutilleux's "The Shadows of Time," and Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Christian Tetzlaff). . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 8:30: Baritone Bryn Terfel and pianist Malcolm Martineau offer a recital of songs by Schubert and Finzi, as well as traditional songs from Mr. Terfel's native Wales. (Lenox, Mass. 800-274-8499.) . . . **note:** Other performances in the Festival of Contemporary Music, featuring fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center, take place on Aug. 8 at 2:30 (works by Wuorinen, Adams, Carter, and Thomas Adès), Aug. 9 at 10:30 A.M. (Dutilleux, Kagel, Adams, Arthur Benjamin, and Robert Zuidam), Aug. 9 at 8:30 (Gubaidulina, Stravinsky, Kagel, Messiaen, and Bartók), and Aug. 10 at 8:30 (Dutilleux, Takemitsu, Kagel, and Peter Lieberson).

Caramoor—Aug. 6 at 4:15: Sonatas by Bach, Schubert, and Shostakovich, performed by cellist Sophie Shao and pianist Benjamin Loeb. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 8: The Brentano String Quartet plays quartets by Haydn (in B-Flat Major, Op. 71, No. 1), Nicholas Maw (his Third), and Beethoven (in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2). . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 4:30: In the final concert of the season, young performers on the rise offer Mozart's G-Minor String Quintet, Dohnányi's C-Major Serenade (Op. 10), and Brahms's Sextet No. 1. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

Glimmerglass Opera—Aug. 6 at 8 and Aug. 9 at 2: "Tosca." . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 8: Virgil Thomson's "The Mother of Us All." . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 1:30 and Aug. 10 at 2: Handel's "Partenope." . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 8 and Aug. 11 at 2: "Falstaff." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

Maverick Concerts—Aug. 8 at 8: Parthenia, a consort of viols, offers music by Purcell and his contemporaries. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 3: The Colorado String Quartet performs quartets by Haydn (in B-Flat Major, Op. 64, No. 3), Shostakovich (his Fourteenth), and Beethoven (in B-Flat Major, Op. 130, with the "Grosse Fuge"). (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217.)

Music Mountain—The first of two weekends spotlighting the Wihan String Quartet is given over to Beethoven's Quartet in B-Flat Major (Op. 18, No. 6), Schubert's Quartet in E-Flat Major (D. 87), and Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet (Op. 81, with Michael Boriskin assisting). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Aug. 9 at 3.)

Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival—This summer's festival opens with performances of Stravinsky's "A Soldier's Tale" (in the composer's trio version), Fauré's A-Major Violin Sonata (here performed in a transcription for flute, featuring the festival's artistic director, Marya Martin), and Dvořák's Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 87). (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton, N.Y. Aug. 9 at 6:30. For information about tickets, call 516-537-6368. The festival continues through Aug. 25.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Night Moves—Alfresco dancing is offered Thursday nights this month outside the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center in Central Park, starting Aug. 6, from 7 to 8:30, with music by the Harbor Conservatory Latin Ensemble. Lessons begin at 6. (Fifth Ave. at 110th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ On Aug. 6 from 7:30 to 9:30, the north side of Union Square Park becomes an outdoor roller disco when a six-foot-diameter disco ball rises above a two-hundred-by-eighty-foot rink. A d.j. from radio station WKTU will provide the beat, and free skates will be available for the evening. (Broadway at 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

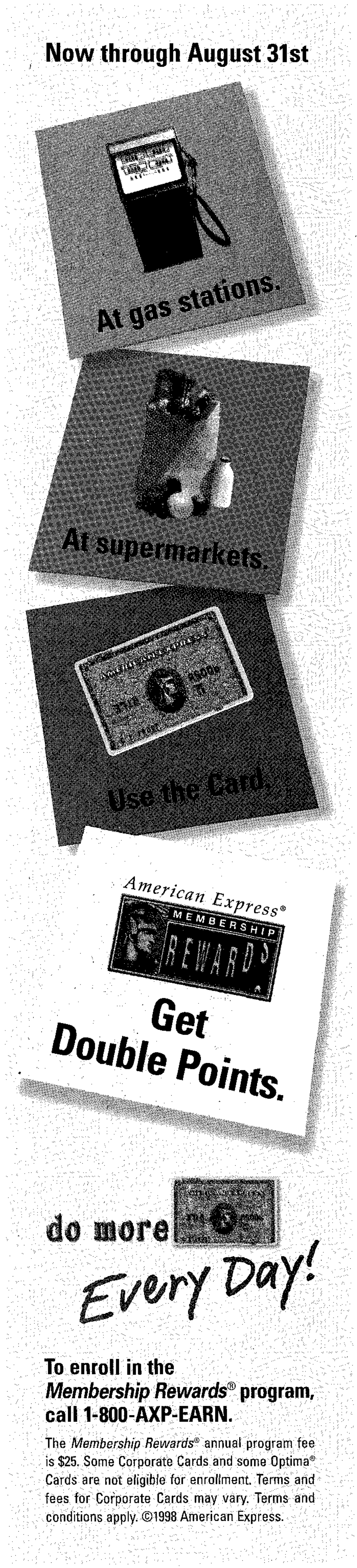
Night Stills—Anyone under the illusion that the vogue for outdoor dancing in New York is a recent phenomenon will be enlightened by the photography exhibit "Stepping Out: A Century of Dance in New York City Parks," which documents square dancing and jitterbugging in Riverside and Central Parks during the Second World War, go-go and ballroom dancing during the sixties, as well as a variety of professional dance performances. Through Sept. 10. (Arsenal gallery, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. 360-8163. Open Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 5.)

Hot, Hot, Hot—In preparation for the West Indian Day parade, held annually on Labor Day weekend, Cheryl Byron, a singer, dancer, poet, and founder of a performing-arts group called Something Positive, has organized a day of costume-making workshops, steel-drum and dance performances, and panel discussions dedicated to the history and traditions of carnival. (Medgar Evers College, 1650 Bedford Ave., between Crown and Montgomery Sts., Brooklyn. Aug. 8, beginning at 9. For more information, call 718-951-3645.)

Reading—Aug. 5 at 6: By poets Peter Constantine and Peter Manolakos. (Union Square Park, Broadway at 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talk—Aug. 9 at noon: Zeyba Rahman and Robert Browning, both of the World Music Institute, are joined by *Times* music critic Jon Pareles and others in a panel discussion about *qawwali*, the devotional music of the Sufis, and its late practitioner Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. (Arsenal gallery, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. For reservations, which are required, call 360-2756.)

Tour—Aug. 9 at 11: George Michaels, operations director of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, leads a jaunt through the hidden parts of the city's longest suspension bridge. For more information, call 718-243-8601.



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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Hitting the Road

AROUND this time of year, getting in the car and going somewhere—anywhere—seems like the best idea in the world. When it comes to outfitting the vehicle with comforts for your exodus from Manhattan, two possibilities present themselves: the uptown road trip and the downtown road trip.

The uptown getaway tends to involve a let's-take-it-with-us spirit. If you're the sort who can't leave the house without bringing along a home-entertainment center, the people at **Sound Effects Communications Corp.** (337 E. 64th St.; 737-1122) will be happy to demonstrate the Alpine Mobile Multimedia System, whose basic unit sells for $1,499. It allows you to activate other components, all add-ons, including a CD player that can handle twelve disks ($549), a digital-video-disk player ($499), and a 5.6-inch TV monitor ($749) located on the back of the headrests or on the visor (not the driver's). Altogether, they should be more than adequate for keeping you calm during the backup at the Triborough Bridge or the Lincoln Tunnel. With all this hardware, the well-mannered Clifford 900-IQ alarm system becomes obligatory ($799, installed). "You are standing too close to the vehicle. Please stand back," it tells the break-in artist. If this doesn't do the trick, Clifford begins to wail.

If you're planning to travel farther afield than, say, Short Hills or Garden City, and are worried about getting lost, the Magellan PathMaster navigation system might be worth the price tag ($1,695). Available at **The Sharper Image** (4 W. 57th St.; 265-2550), the Magellan consults the stars (well, the satellites) to pinpoint exactly where you are when you're feeling disoriented at any given time in the journey, and it will tell you, with catchy graphics or voice commands, the most efficient route to your destination. It also likes to point out notable landmarks, give restaurant suggestions, and find gas stations. Bug spatters and other road schmutz are cleansed by **Teknicar** (651 Eleventh Ave.; 765-4777), a health spa for the top auto breeds, where the staff uses both imported elixirs and a lot of elbow grease. You might want to think about the twenty-four-hour detailing treatment ($295) or the two-day, three-stage mirror-finish wax superscrub ($495).

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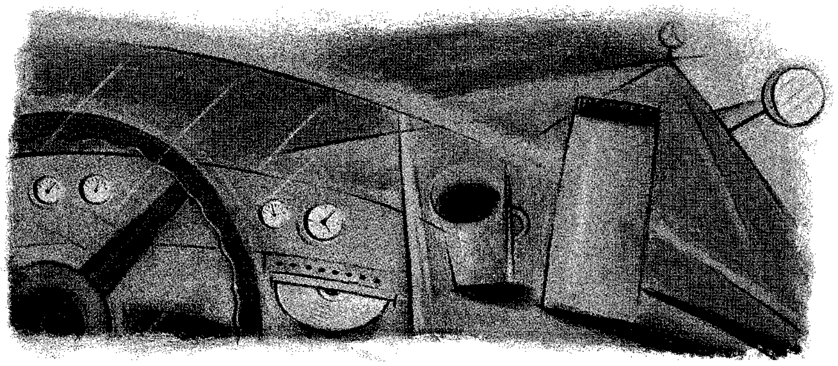
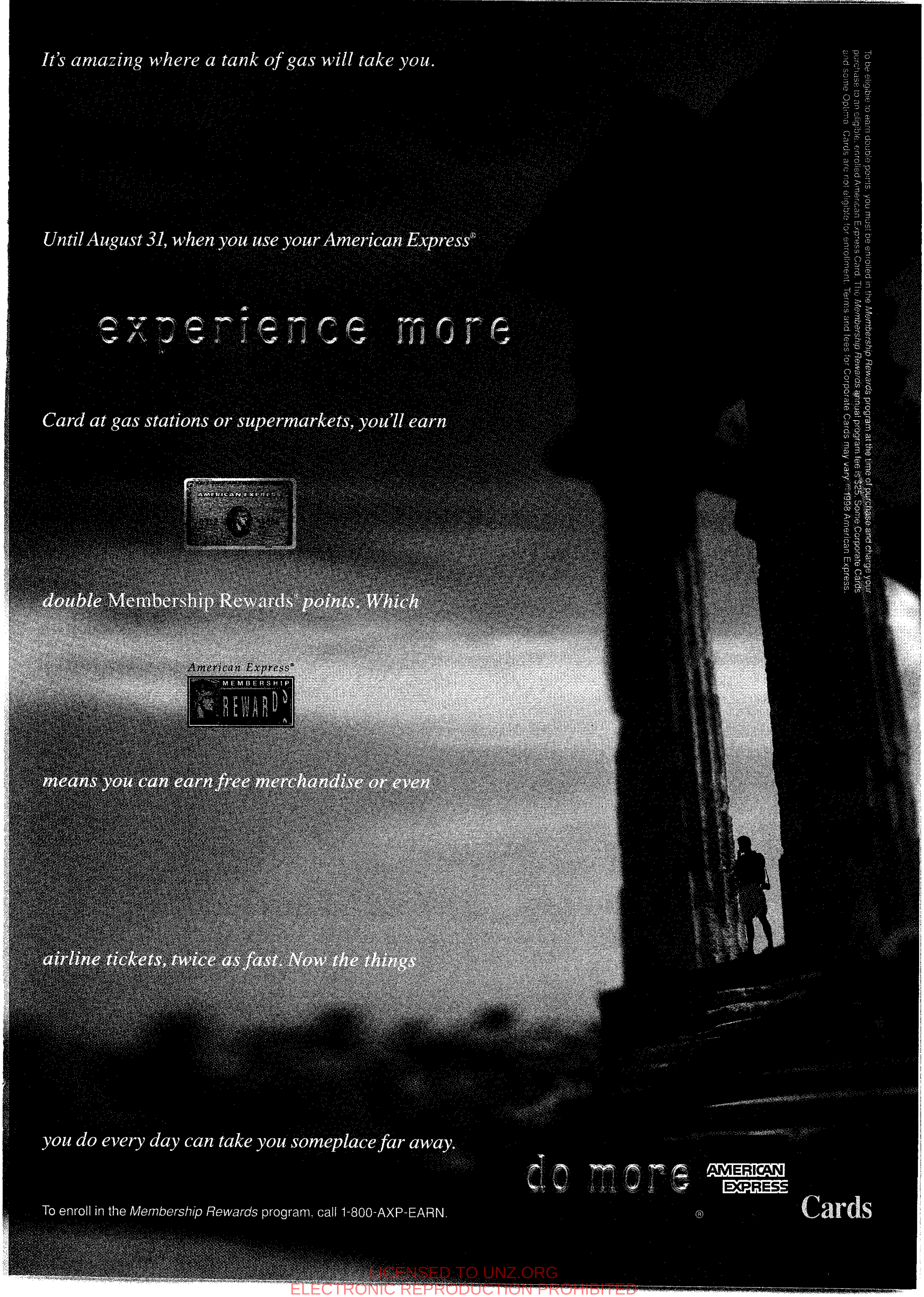
DOWNTOWN road trips suggest different accoutrements. Kerouac groupies might check out the selection of car kitsch at **Strauss Discount Auto** (644 E. 14th St.; 995-8000). Pairs of Oldenburgian fuzzy dice ($3) and miniature boxing gloves ($6) will make looking in your rearview less routine; putting a Can o' Scent ($5) under the seat will add a "new car" fragrance to the interior; and a neon license-plate frame ($30) should ward off potential tailgaters when they get too close. Over at **Broadway Panhandler** (477 Broome St.; 966-3434), you'll find an elegant, bullet-shaped, brushed-steel Nissan vacuum flask ($45), which is ideal for keeping the stay-awake supply of caffeine hot.

Apart from retailing such basic essentials as gaskets and air filters, **Worth Auto Parts** (31 Cooper Sq.; 777-5920) sells a terrific back-support belt ($13) to augment a less than ergonomic seat, and a Wolo backup alarm ($16) that declaims, "¡Atención! ¡Moviendo hacia atrás!" For a stylish way of getting angry at a roadhog, Worth offers a horn that toots a hundred and two different songs ($50).

A few blocks south, at **John's Mini Bike & Bicycle Shop** (151 E. Houston St.; 982-5310), is something called a Phantom Scooter, a small, motorized platform on two wheels that stows neatly in the trunk ($695-$895). The Phantom does about thirty miles on twenty cents of gas—perfect for a stay-at-home road trip around Manhattan.



EDEL RODRIGUEZ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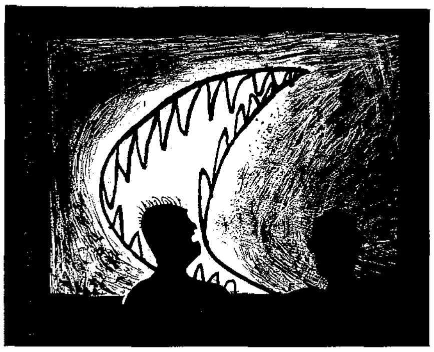
THE MOVIES



OPENINGS

First Love, Last Rites—The Louisiana bayou country is the setting for this drama of young love. Directed by Jesse Peretz; starring Natasha Gregson Wagner and Giovanni Ribisi. Opening Aug. 7. (Quad Cinema.)

Gadjo Dilo—A young Parisian (Romain Duris) in search of a Gypsy singer finds himself on a journey of discovery. Directed by Tony Gatlif. In Romany, French, and Romanian. Opening Aug. 7. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Halloween: H20—Michael Myers stalks Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis). Directed by Steve Miner. Opening Aug. 5. (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Krzysztof Kieślowski: I'm So-So—A 1995 documentary about the late filmmaker by Krzysztof Wierzbicki. In Polish. Aug. 5-11. (Film Forum.)

Safe Men—A comedy of mistaken identities, with Sam Rockwell and Steve Zahn, directed by John Hamburg. Opening Aug. 7.

Snake Eyes—Brian De Palma's thriller about an assassination that takes place during a boxing match. With Nicolas Cage, Gary Sinise, John Heard, and Carla Gugino; written by David Koepp. Opening Aug. 7. (Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Tranceformer: A Portrait of Lars Von Trier—A documentary by Stig Björkman. In Danish and English. Aug. 5-11. (Film Forum.)

Unmade Beds—The singles scene, as experienced by four New Yorkers. Written and directed by Nicholas Barker. Opening Aug. 7. (The Screening Room.)

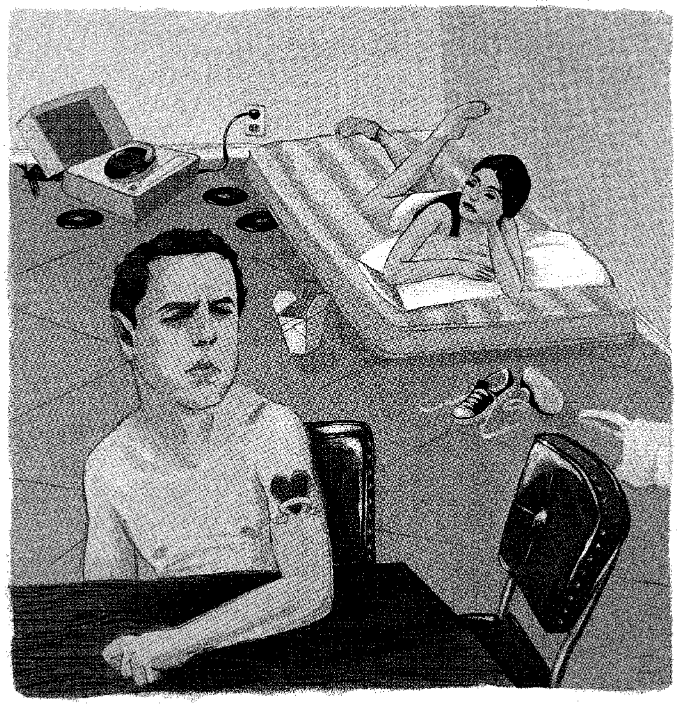
FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Armageddon—"The Right Stuff" meets "The Dirty Dozen" in a frenzy of special effects and ear-shattering detonations. An asteroid "the size of Texas" is speeding toward our fair planet, and unless it's nuked within eighteen days we'll all be saying good night, world. NASA's executive director (Billy Bob Thornton) devises a plan to drill a hole in the asteroid and blast it from the inside. Enter Bruce Willis, as Harry S. Stamper, "the world's best deep-core driller," who recruits a crew of roughnecks, including Ben Affleck and Steve Buscemi, to do the job. Willis, with his imperturbable gaze and incessant smirk, doesn't seem a natural choice for even a scruffy hero like Harry, but Affleck demonstrates a sexy, Paul Newmanish charm. The surprisingly witty script was worked on by a squadron of writers, including Robert Towne.—*Daphne Merkin* (7/13/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss—Billy (Sean P. Hayes) is the sort of gay man who drives the religious right crazy: "I am a homosexual, a film buff with a penchant for women's melodramas," he announces proudly. An unemployed photographer, Billy goes around Los Angeles taking snapshots of everyone and complains about his unsatisfying love life to a female friend named, confusingly, George (Meredith Scott Lynn). When he espies the great-looking Gabriel (Brad Rowe) in a coffeehouse, he decides that the waiter is the perfect lead for his series of classic Hollywood screen kisses, to be photographed with an all-male (half-drag) cast. The movie's strengths are stylistic, from its oversaturated Frida Kahlo colors to its clever use of old-fashioned camera devices. But once you've appreciated the campy details—the matching tones of turquoise in the drag queen's dress, eyeshadow, and lipstick; a pair of earrings made of CDs—you may find yourself longing for the angst-ridden homosexuals of old. With Holly Woodlawn.—*D.M.* (7/27/98) (Angelika Film Center, 19th Street East 6, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Disturbing Behavior—The gorgeous teen children of a small town are lobotomized by their parents in director David Nutter's "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" rip-off. The cast, featuring some of TV's most photogenic actors, is saddled with Scott Rosenberg's groaning dialogue and totally played-out scenario. The film wastes the considerable talent of Bruce Greenwood (who was the grieving father in "The Sweet Hereafter"), in the thankless role of a local doctor turned mad scientist.—*Bruce Diones* (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and State.)



Opening Aug. 7 at the Quad Cinema, Giovanni Ribisi and Natasha Gregson Wagner in Jesse Peretz's "First Love, Last Rites."

ZOHAR LAZAR

East Palace, West Palace—In a park in a Chinese city, the cops roust the young gay men who gather there. When they are apart from the others, A-Lan suddenly gives the policeman escorting him a kiss on the cheek and jogs off, looking playfully over his shoulder. The conflicted look on the cop's face pretty much tells us where this picture is heading. The cop comes back a few days later, this time out of uniform (but in a leather jacket), brings A-Lan back to the empty police station, and a nightlong interrogation ensues. Or is it a seduction? And who's seducing whom? Is the cop looking for a confession or a turn-on? Do the long silences denote menace or just a paucity of plot? Director Zhang Yuan's feature erupts in a flash of passion, but the payoff isn't worth the wait. In Chinese.—*Ken Marks* (Quad Cinema.)

Full Tilt Boogie—From the outset, in which Quentin Tarantino and George Clooney ham their way through a staged skit for the camera, Sarah Kelly's chronicle of how the director Robert Rodriguez and his crew of non-union slackers made the Mexican vampire Western "From Dusk till Dawn" feels more like a promo video than a documentary. What might have been a revealing portrait of a young director's trial in the desert—Rodriguez's set, and part of his ten-week shooting schedule, were consumed by fire in the Mojave—is turned into a back-scratching that gives everyone, from key grips to caterers, a chance to get personal. When outside union organizers threaten to strike the horror flick, Kelly's moviemaking takes on a "60 Minutes"-style bravado. But an angry hand raised by a union guard dog quickly sends her back to stargazing.—*Jay Fielden* (Angelika Film Center.)

The Hand (1981)—After winning an Oscar for the Turkey-bashing screenplay of "Midnight Express," Oliver Stone directed his adaptation of Marc Brandel's horror novel "The Lizard's Tail." Everything went wrong, starting with the new, B-movie title. The Jamesian ghost at the center of Brandel's book is the hand shorn off a cartoonist in a freak car accident. Does the hand live, and is it picking off the antihero's enemies? Or is the cartoonist's tough mechanical prosthesis doing the dirty work? Stone remakes the satiric *Village Voice* doodler of the book in his own blood-and-guts image, as the creator of a sword-and-sorcery comic strip. Even Michael Caine can't keep an ironic distance from this flagrant character. And the hand in this film is just another beast with five fingers. Whenever Caine leaves his house, you keep hoping the hand will curl up in front of the tube and tune in to "The Muppet Show."—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 7 and Aug. 9.)

Licence to Kill (1989)—Timothy Dalton, as the fourth James Bond, promised to restore the spirited slyness that characterized the Connery years. Unfortunately, Dalton's 007 turned out to be a single-minded fellow who had so little energy that he could barely jive and flirt. The second and last of Dalton's entries pits Bond against a powerful drug baron named Sanchez (played with imperial understatement by Robert Davi), who owns a Latin-American capital called Isthmus City. There are some good baroque gimmicks, like a diamond-adorned iguana, and Benicio del Toro endows one of Sanchez's hit men with a memorable preening creepiness (he's almost a Hispanic Richard Widmark). But under John Glen's direction, the film is "Miami Vice" without the style.—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 11.)

Mafia!—Jim Abrahams ("Hot Shots!," "Airplane!") takes on the "Godfather" dynasty in his latest exclamation-pointed satire, but this one is a pretty wheezy exercise. It's not just that the jokes are old and obvious (in the earlier films that was part of the fun), it's that the form itself has been worn out—TV comedies nowadays seem to spoof Hollywood films every week. Lloyd Bridges stars, in his last performance, and he's warm and funny as the aging don.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Embassy 1, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Mask of Zorro—Antonio Banderas cuts a dashing figure as Johnston McCulley's Robin Hood-like hero, but director Martin Campbell's lumpy direction doesn't coalesce into anything much beyond a pleasant assembly of set pieces. Still, there are some wonderful moments, particularly Banderas's rousing swordplay-as-foreplay scenes with his gorgeous co-star, Catherine Zeta-Jones, and his flamboyantly choreographed duelling scenes with the glinty-eyed Anthony Hopkins, who trains Banderas like a Jedi Knight.—*B.D.* (84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Miracle of Morgan's Creek (1944)—It's wartime, and Betty Hutton is the over-enthusiastic girl who dates a soldier and produces sextuplets. This is one of Preston Sturges's surreal-slapstick-satire-conniption-fit comedies, and part of our great crude heritage. The picture was held up a year because of censorship problems, and you'll know why. With Eddie Bracken, Diana Lynn, William Demarest, Porter Hall, Esther Howard, J. Farrell MacDonald as the Sheriff, Jimmy Conlin as the Mayor, and, carried over from "The Great McGinty," Brian Donlevy as the Governor, and Akim Tamiroff as the Boss.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum 2; Aug. 5-6.)

Mon Homme (1996)—A happy hooker meets her match—a homeless man (Gérard Lanvin) who turns out to be a love machine—in Bertrand Blier's savory tragicomedy. More sustained and rhythmic even than "Ménage" (thanks partly to the bold use of Barry White *and* a Gorecki score on the soundtrack), it's Blier's funniest, perkiest film since "Get Out Your Handkerchiefs." Anouk Grinberg brings an ecstatic brio to the leading role. In the film's opening sequence, she fulfills her customers' erotic needs without fail while Blier's camera stares at her, transfixed. Until the fuzzy letdowns of the final act, the movie is a sizzling intellectual apache dance. With Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi, hilarious (and hot) as a besotted manicurist. In French.—*M.S.* (Florence Gould Hall; Aug. 11.)

The Negotiator—F. Gary Gray, the young director of the 1996 female heist film "Set It Off," runs with a good script (by James DeMonaco and Kevin Fox) and gives us the summer's first action film that's as rich in character as it is in suspense. The tension-filled plot—a hostage negotiator (Samuel L. Jackson) takes some hostages of his own while another police strategist (Kevin Spacey) tries to persuade him to give up—allows ample room for two well-modulated performances. The movie is packed with terrific supporting roles—David Morse, Regina Taylor, Ron Rifkin, and particularly the late J.T. Walsh all shine.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Parent Trap—If you didn't know better, you might think that Martha Stewart was behind this remake of the classic Hayley Mills trifle about identical twins trying to reunite their divorced parents. This time around, the twins' father (Dennis Quaid) is a vintner with a palatial spread in Napa Valley, while Mom (Natasha Richardson, looking like Emma Thompson) is a famous London wedding-gown designer. Director Nancy Meyers seems to be aiming at an audience of acquisitive baby boomers, not kids: she makes us salivate over china and lush gardens, and resentful of the human beings who are blocking our view. A clever young redhead named Lindsay Lohan holds her own as the twins, one well-bred English and one tomboy—but no one can gush like the irreplaceable Mills.—*Sarah Kerr* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Saving Private Ryan—Steven Spielberg's new picture, one of his best, is a sandwich. The meat of the tale concerns a bunch of U.S. Army Rangers, led by Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks), who are sent into Normandy to rescue Ryan (Matt Damon), the sole survivor of four brothers. On either side of this bold endeavor you get half an hour of unyielding combat: first, the D Day landings on Omaha Beach, and later, a consummate last stand in which too few Americans try to hold an inland bridge against too many Germans and too many tanks. Most viewers will be impressed but unsurprised by the central section; it feels wrought, and finely scripted (by Robert Rodat), and nudged by sentimentality. The reason that they will carry the movie lodged in their minds is the infernal, brain-shaking quality of the battle scenes; Spielberg obviously decided that blood and guts meant just that, and so he arranged his violence into a semblance of pure disorder. The illusion holds, complete with severed limbs and wellsprings of blood, and it feels honorable; Spielberg's preachy movies can be an awful grind, but, apart from a disposable coda, this new work is too swift (and often too inaudible) to weigh you down. It feels like an atonement for the sins of "Amistad."—*Anthony Lane* (8/3/98) (Chelsea West, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Seventh Heaven—Benoît Jacquot's latest excavation of the female psyche stars Sandrine Kiberlain as the mopey, sexually unfulfilled

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PHOTOIMAGE:
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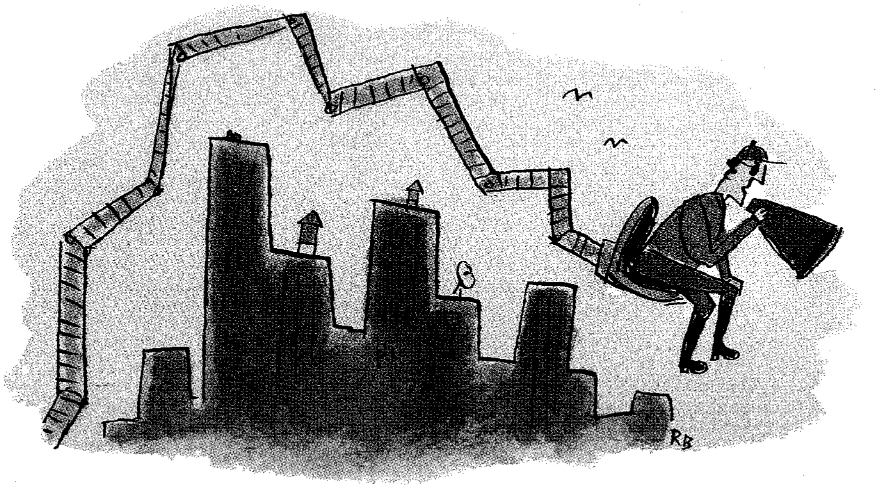
Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Exhibition and related catalogue made possible by the generous support of James and Margie Krebs.
Additional support provided by Data General.

young wife of a Paris surgeon. A hypnotist unlocks painful memories and helps her to feel desire again, but this terrifies her husband (Vincent Lindon), who's grown used to drawing strength from her weakness. As usual, Jacquot is hyperintelligent, technically brilliant, and a little too proud of his seriousness. One longs for some levity, or, at the very least, less hairsplitting discussion of the difference between "charm" and "gratification." In French.—*S.K.* (Quad Cinema.)

Smoke Signals—Chris Eyre's doleful comedy follows two young Coeur d'Alene Indians (Adam Beach and Evan Adams) from their Idaho reservation to Phoenix, where the father of one of them has suddenly died, poor and alone. One is a stud and the other a misfit, and at times the odd-couple pairing flirts with sitcom cuteness. But the scenes on the reservation are bursting with fresh detail, and one comes away realizing how rare it is to see a film in which modern-day Native Americans are portrayed with care or accuracy—let alone a film about the struggling poor.—*S.K.* (Angelika Film Center and Gotham Cinema.)



ROXANNA BIKADOROFF

There's Something About Mary—The Farrelly Brothers, who have tipped the outrageousness scale before ("Dumb and Dumber," "Kingpin"), come up with some great new gross-out gags in this romantic comedy. The star, Cameron Diaz, in her Olivia Newton-John haircut, is the perfect naïve foil—she looks like she never knows what hit her. As the two loopy guys who are in love with her, Matt Dillon and Ben Stiller are garishly charming and full of desperate and irreverent ploys to get the girl. The film is packed with tasteless jokes (the best of them are crudely sexual), and it has a refreshing mean-spiritedness.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Western—French New New Wave director Manuel Poirier's charming road movie, in which a Mutt and Jeff pair of guys yo-yo their way up and down the coast of Brittany. ("Western" won the Grand Jury prize at Cannes last year.) Paco (Sergi López), a Spanish shoe salesman, picks up a shiftless Russian hitchhiker, Nino (Sacha Bourdo, in his first film role), who soon contrives to steal his car. When Paco finally catches up with Nino, he pounds the crap out of him. Naturally, he feels remorse, and when Nino gets out of the hospital the two become road buddies. Their picaresque misadventures take them genially through the polycultural France that was evident during the World Cup matches, and, if the women they meet along the way all tend to be wind-swept Meryl Streep types, where's the harm in that? In French.—*Jeff Gustavson* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

BASEKETBALL: Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas. and Waverly. . . . **BUFFALO '66:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **CAN'T HARDLY WAIT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **EVER AFTER:** Beekman, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, and Waverly. . . . **THE GOVERNESS:** Paris. . . . **HENRY FOOL:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE HORSE WHISPERER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO** (reviewed in our issue of 6/15/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LETHAL WEAPON 4:** Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MARK TWAIN'S AMERICA:** Lincoln Square. . . . **NIGHTS OF CABIRIA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **THE OPPOSITE OF SEX:** Angelika Film Center, 59th Street East Cinema, and Regency. . . . **OUT OF SIGHT** (7/6/98): Art Greenwich Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and State. . . . **π:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE SALTMEN OF TIBET:** Film Forum. . . . **SLIDING DOORS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE SPANISH PRISONER** (4/13/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TITANIC** (12/15/97): Worldwide Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Aug. 5-6: "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek" (†) and "Unfaithfully Yours" (1948, Preston Sturges). . . . From Aug. 7: "Festival" (1967, Murray Lerner).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Aug. 6 at 2:30 and Aug. 7 at 6: "Surviving Desire" (1991, Hal Hartley). . . . Aug. 6 at 6: "A Midnight Clear" (1992, Keith Gordon). . . . Aug. 7 at 2:30 and Aug. 9 at 5: "The Hand" (†). . . . Aug. 7 at 8 and Aug. 9 at 2: "Miller's Crossing" (1990, Joel Coen). . . . Aug. 8 at 2 and Aug. 10 at 6: "Mighty Aphrodite" (1995, Woody Allen). . . . Aug. 8 at 5 and Aug. 10 at 2:30: "The Bridges of Madison County" (1995, Clint Eastwood). . . . Aug. 11 at 2:30: "GoldenEye" (1995, Martin Campbell). . . . Aug. 11 at 6: "Licence to Kill" (†).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Aug. 20: A program of films from the Philippines. . . . Aug. 8-9 at 2: "The Muppets Take Manhattan" (1984, Frank Oz).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed or produced by Steven Spielberg. Aug. 8 at 2 and 7: "The Color Purple" (1985). . . . Aug. 8 at 5: "An American Tail" (1986, Don Bluth). . . . Aug. 9 at 2: "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989). . . . Aug. 9 at 4:30: "Back to the Future Part III" (1990, Robert Zemeckis).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 11 at 12:30, 3:30, and 6:30: "A Piece of Pleasure" (1974, Claude Chabrol; in French). . . . Aug. 11 at 9: "Mon Homme" (†).

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000, ext. 230)—A program of Mexican films on which Gabriel Figueroa served as cinematographer. All films in Spanish, with English subtitles. Aug. 8 at 5: "Over on the Big Ranch" (1933, Fernando de Fuentes).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with coming attractions. The feature on Aug. 10 will be "Bell, Book and Candle" (1958, Richard Quine). (Rain date is the following night.)

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Aug. 9 at 7, the feature will be "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone" (1961, José Quintero).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Aug. 6 at 8:30: "Man with a Movie Camera" (1929, Dziga Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ A program of films by Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian, with English subtitles. Aug. 7 at 8 and 10 and Aug. 8 at 5:30: "The Girlfriends" (1955). . . . Aug. 8 at 3: "Il Grido" (1957). . . . Aug. 9 at 6: "Red Desert" (1964). . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 8: "Entuziasm" (1931, Vertov).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Aug. 30: "Queen of the Stardust Ballroom" (1975, Sam O'Steen), with Maureen Stapleton. . . . ¶ Through Sept. 24: A series of films starring the Monty Pythons.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
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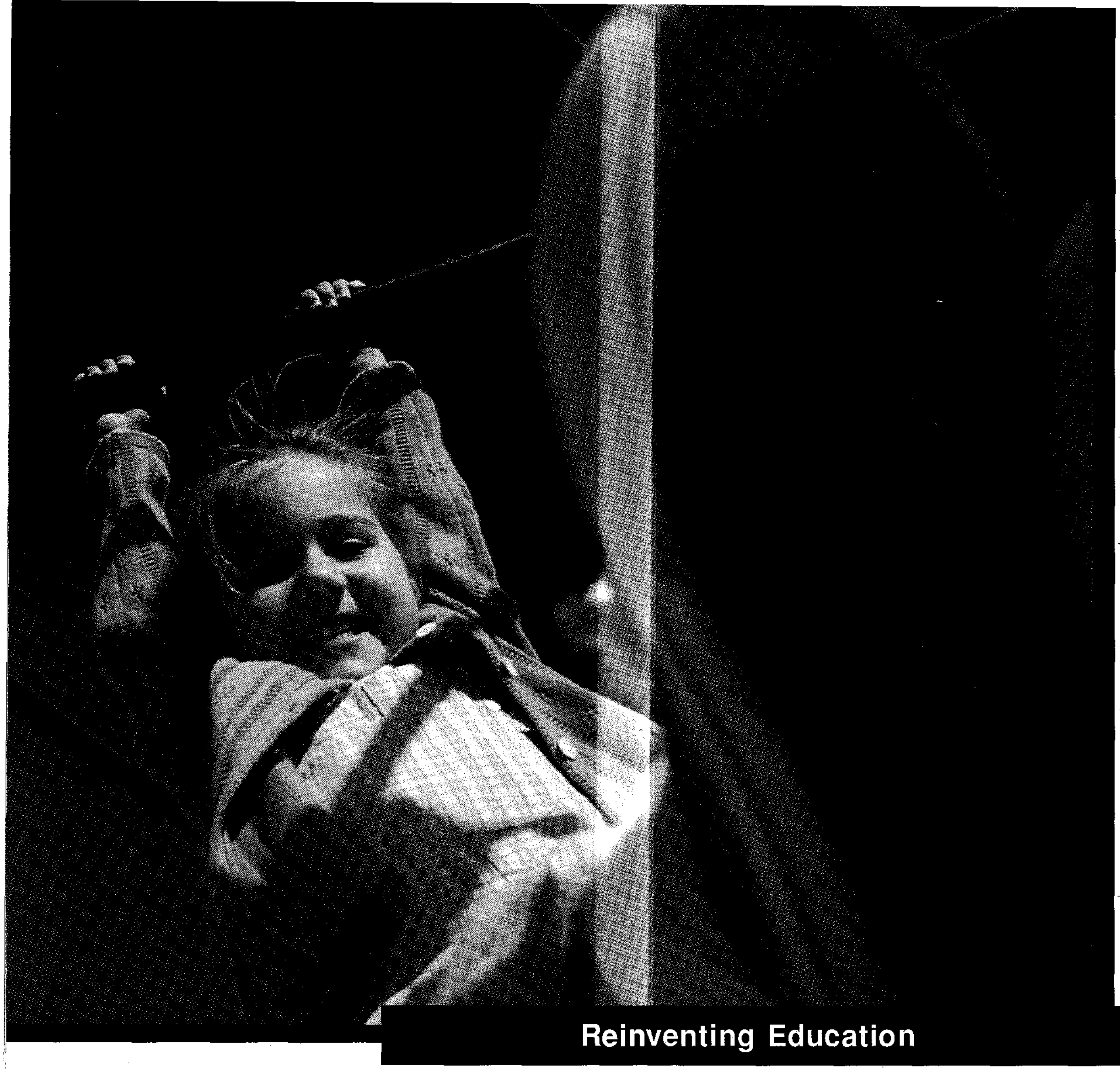

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

DEPT. OF MENTORS

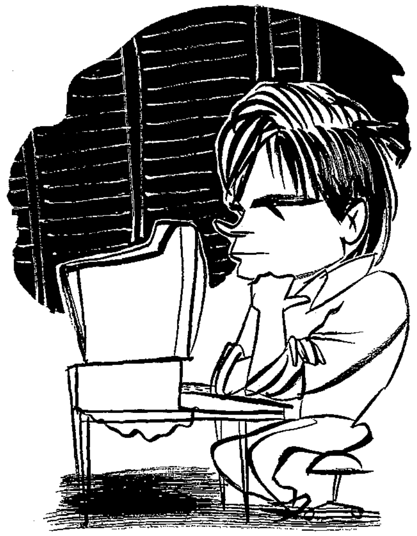
It's time for George Stephanopoulos to deal with his Oedipal issues.

If there is such a thing as a designer version of a padded cell, it may be the gray-flannel-lined study in which George Stephanopoulos faces his computer each day, trying to come to terms with Bill Clinton. As anyone familiar with *Architectural Digest* knows, the study, like the rest of Stephanopoulos's Riverside Drive apartment, was decorated for the former Clinton aide courtesy of Ralph Lauren. And, as anyone who follows the publishing world knows, "All Too Human," the $2.85 million memoir that Stephanopoulos is writing for Little, Brown about working for Clinton, was supposed to be farmed out to an expert, too. Stephanopoulos had hired the ghostwriter William Novak, a ventriloquist so skillful that he was capable of scripting pathos for Oliver North and warmth for Nancy Reagan.

But in January, when the allegations about Monica Lewinsky changed the tenor of the Clinton Administration, a lot changed in Stephanopoulos's life as well. The formerly sociable political operative started to chart a lonelier and, some suggest, disloyal course. He startled the political world by being the first among Clinton's associates to publicly use the word "impeachment." ("The feeling around here about George," one White House aide says, "ranges from disappointment at the high end to 'I wasn't raised like that.'" All that Rahm Emanuel, a close White House friend, can say is "Um, George, is, you know, um, he's troubled.")

Around the same time, Stephanopoulos says, he and his editor realized that his book would have to grapple with the President's personal life and with Stephanopoulos's own (inadvertent) role in misleading the public about it. He also decided that he would have to sit down and write the book himself. The book, he says, "is *my* experience, what *I* saw of the political system, of him, and of her, and it can't come out of someone else's fingers—or head."

"It's been a hard process," Stephanopoulos says. "But I can't really complain." He is aware that his book contract, his lucrative perch on ABC News, and his visiting professorship at Columbia University deprive him of the right to whine. Dressed in painter's pants, his hair shaggy, he says that he tries to write two thousand words per day. One day last week, he planned to devote the afternoon to Paula Jones. Since the book ends before the Lewinsky story surfaced, it won't delve into the current saga, but it will foreshadow it. "What is remarkable is going back and seeing just how the patterns emerge," he says, referring to Clinton's handling of questions about the draft, marijuana, and other women. "Huge consequences flowed from small personal decisions."



George Stephanopoulos

The Lewinsky situation, Stephanopoulos says, is "not just sex. . . . It's about what you sacrifice for the privilege of being President. It's a breach of trust. . . . It's the presumption, the taking of advantage . . ." His voice trails off. Clearly he feels that Clinton may have taken advantage not just of a twenty-two-year-old intern but of other former loyalists, like himself, as well.

Meanwhile, in a weird plot twist, Stephanopoulos turns out to have his own White House intern problem. For several years now, he has been stalked by a former White House intern, a young woman who trailed him all over Washington and has now relocated to New York, to within a few blocks of his apartment. A few weeks ago, Stephanopoulos took steps to seek an order of protection—an approach to intern relations that contrasts sharply with the White House's.

In a lighter moment, Stephanopoulos mentions that Clinton's much examined life reminds him of "The Truman Show." The only question now is whether the saga will end with the President bursting triumphantly out of the media bubble, as Truman Burbank does, or will rewind to the earlier Jim Carrey feature "Liar, Liar."

—Jane Mayer

RAG TRADE

A fish-out-of-water tale at the second annual Lilith Fair.

The luxury bus pulling up to a V.I.P. parking spot at the Lilith Fair concert in Holmdel, New Jersey, the other day might as well have been an alien spaceship. Grinding to a halt at the curb, it disgorged six beauty editors from five women's magazines, all of whom had

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

been invited to attend the earthy, all-female music festival by Bioré, which makes facial-pore-cleansing strips and is a co-sponsor of the event.

The other 17,494 concertgoers were, for the most part, vigorous-looking, unmade-up women dressed in shorts, tank tops, and heavy-soled sandals. Many of them wore their hair cropped short and had large tattoos—eagles, flowers, one that read "AMY"—emblazoned across their biceps.

"It's the Indigo Girls factor," one editor commented as she exited the bus fanning a sheer eggplant-colored Prada blouse, which she wore over a spaghetti-strap camisole. "Take off the blouse," suggested her companion, a pale blonde in a black Vivienne Tam top. "You'll look so Lilith." The tip was taken.

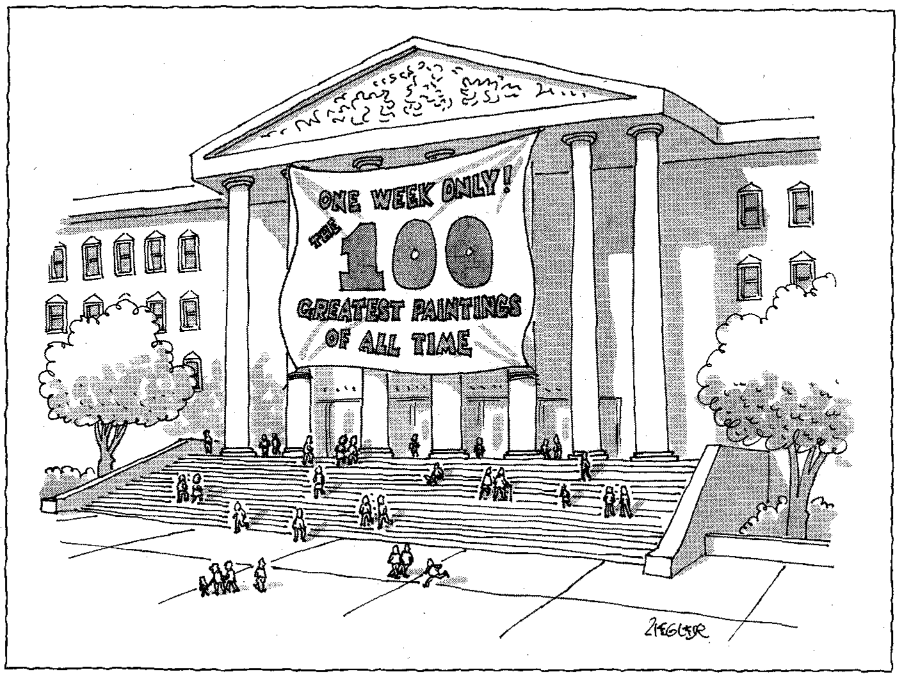
Laser vein treatment and sample sales were the topics at hand as the women headed for the entrance, large black sunglasses firmly in place, Louis XIV heels clicking in unison over the concrete.

"God, I forgot where I was going this afternoon," another blond editor said, looking down at her Chanel slides as she daintily handed over an Évian bottle to the man in charge of confiscating open containers.

The beauty editors then wafted toward their seats, giving little more than a glance to venders selling hemp jewelry, batik sarongs, and Goddess Color Therapy Nail Potion. Once inside the arena, their conversation turned to parties in the Hamptons and to Natalie Merchant's fashion sense.

"Who does she think she is, Little Miss Muffet?" one editor asked, referring to Merchant's billowy pink taffeta skirt.

"More Bridesmaid from Hell, I'd say," another answered. "But I love Natalie. So she doesn't feel constrained by the confines of what we call fashion. So what?"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ZIEGLER

The evening's spirit of forgiveness was catching. From one end of the row came the thin, clear voice of an editor singing along with Merchant and the Indigo Girls. From another, pale-pink-polished toes tapped rhythmically as jumbo cups of beer replaced designer water and French-manicured fingers dipped nachos into vats of viscous melted cheese. By the end of the night, the beauty editors were on their feet, whooping wildly as Sarah McLachlan brought the concert to a close. "We are born . . . innocent," they warbled together. Clearly, the Prada obsession came later. —RACHEL URQUHART

THE POLITICAL LIFE

Fred Tuttle is looking to trade the hills of Vermont for Capitol Hill.

If Fred Tuttle, a candidate for the Republican nomination for the United States Senate from Vermont, is offended that his campaign manager, John O'Brien, persists in describing him as "tremendously unqualified," he hasn't commented publicly. Actually, for a while there, before the Demerol wore off, Tuttle wasn't commenting coherently on any topic of the day.

Tuttle is, among other things, a seventy-nine-year-old tenth-grade dropout, retired dairy farmer, and star of a 1996 film, "Man with a Plan," the fictional story of an endearingly *echt*-Vermont retired dairy farmer who runs for Congress because he needs a cushy job to pay his overdue tax bill and finance a hip operation for his ninety-four-year-old father. O'Brien is, among other things, a thirty-five-year-old Harvard graduate, sheep farmer, and filmmaker—the writer, director, and producer of "Man with a Plan," which elevated Tuttle to regional cultural-hero status—as well as the brain trust, as it were, of Tuttle's current campaign.

Before Tuttle entered the race, in mid-July, it seemed a foregone conclusion that the Republican nomination—and the right to face the Democratic incumbent, Patrick Leahy—would go to Jack McMullen, a multimillionaire businessman who, until last year, legally resided in Massachusetts. Offended by McMullen's naked carpetbagging, and knowing that Tuttle didn't have much on his immediate agenda other than waiting around to have his arthritic knees surgically replaced, O'Brien suggested, "Why don't you run, Fred?" To which Tuttle replied, "Oh, good idea." When O'Brien refers to Tuttle as tremendously unqualified, he hastens to add that he doesn't think he's any less qualified than McMullen: "At least Fred's spent his whole life in Vermont." The McMullen camp might want to rethink its knee-jerk reply to reporters who raise the carpetbagging issue: "He got here as soon as he could."

A couple of weeks ago, while Tuttle was in the Veterans Administration Hospital in White River Junction, recuperating from his first round of knee surgery, McMullen and the state Republican chairman launched an ill-considered challenge to the validity of his nominating-petition signatures. The challenge proved successful in the short term—the Secretary of State determined that Tuttle was shy of the necessary five hundred—but provoked a general backlash. Given a one-week extension to gather the final twenty-three signatures, O'Brien vowed that he and his comrades would collect twenty-three hundred. While they were doing that, McMullen accused O'Brien of "a very blatant exploitation of the [electoral] process for commercial gain." Specifically, McMullen alleged that O'Brien was trying to boost publicity for "Man with a Plan," which is scheduled to be shown on PBS in October. O'Brien's response was a judicious nondenial: "It's not entirely untrue."

Reporters who tried to interview Tuttle were told that he was temporarily under the influence of pain medication. "Fred turned seventy-nine in the hospital," O'Brien explained. "That night, he called his wife, Dorothy, collect and claimed he was in Woodstock and would she please come pick him up. And Dottie thought that was odd, because Fred knows she doesn't drive."

Bearing a bouquet of flowers, McMullen paid a friendly visit to Tuttle in the hospital. "At some level it seemed to me he may be having some reservations about the course he has embarked on," McMullen told the Barre/Montpelier *Times Argus*, which also reported McMullen's impression "that at one point Tuttle even suggested he was supportive of McMullen and would vote for him."

O'Brien: "When I asked Fred whether he'd told McMullen he'd vote for him, he said, 'Oh, I don't know.' Then I asked, 'Fred, am I manipulating you?' And he said, 'Oh, yes, you are, John, but keep going.' "

Finally, late last week, Tuttle was released from the hospital and returned to his home, in Tunbridge, where, according to O'Brien, "he plans to conduct a front-porch campaign, just like McKinley," with a spending cap of sixteen dollars. In "Man with a Plan," the Tuttle platform was reduced to FRED, an acronym for "Friendly, Renewable, Extraterrestrial, Dinky." O'Brien is tempted to retain that for the Senate race, and he's trying to come up with something snappy for bumper stickers. "So far," he said, "we're leaning toward 'I'm Pro-Fred and I Vote.' " —MARK SINGER

THE PICTURES

This summer's Best Supporting Actor award goes to . . . a cigarette lighter.

By this point in the summer blockbuster season, audiences have become pretty jaded about product placement. Occasionally, however, a product takes center stage and lingers in the memory long after all the asteroids and enemy fire have faded. This summer, that product is clearly the Zippo lighter.

In "Out of Sight," the latest Elmore Leonard novel to be brought to the screen, Jack Foley, the bank robber played by George Clooney, lights his sleek, film-noirish Zippo so often that it's practically his sidekick. Up at Zippo world headquarters, in Bradford, Pennsylvania, however, the marketing people aren't gloating. "Yes, well, we have a long track record of Zippos in films going back to the nineteen-forties," Patrick Grandy, Zippo's director of marketing and communications, said. "There is also a long roster of Broadway productions. Zippo is especially critical on Broadway, because it works." He then ran down a list of the Zippo's film credits that included the scene in "From Here to Eternity" in which Donna Reed Zippoed a cigarette for Montgomery Clift, and the opening of "Apocalypse Now," in which a Zippo delivers an ominous and brooding performance alongside Martin Sheen's pistol.

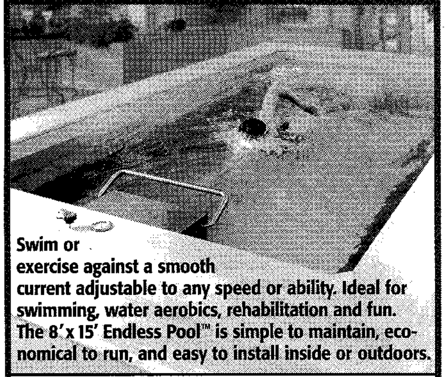
Mr. Grandy confessed that he hadn't yet seen "Out of Sight." In fact, not many of Zippo's people have had a chance to see it, given that the summer is traditionally Zippo's busiest time. In July, aside from producing its usual seventy-seven thousand lighters a day, Zippo is host to the Zippo International Swap Meet, during which thousands of people flock to Bradford, a little town in the center of the Allegheny National Forest, and visit the Zippo Visitors' Center and the Zippo Repair Clinic and walk beneath the Zippo-lighter-shaped street lights. The visitors trade personalized Zippo lighters that have been engraved or painted on their flat sides. ("We call it the canvas," Mr. Grandy said.) This year, Vietnam-era Zippos are trading well, as a result of a new book called "The Vietnam Zippo," which features Zippos that were engraved by U.S. soldiers with sayings such as "If I had a farm in Vietnam and a home in Hell, I'd sell my farm and go home."

When Universal Pictures made the decision to cast the Zippo, a No. 200 model, in "Out of Sight," the studio gave Mr. Grandy a heads-up call. When I asked how much money the filmmakers paid to get the Zippo so much screen time, Mr. Grandy's reply was startling. "We did not place it," he said, explaining that Universal got the Zippo for free. He went on to say that a whole lot of Zippo's eleven hundred employees are able to execute the cool lighter trick that George Clooney's character performs so memorably in the movie: place middle finger on Zippo's flywheel, snap fingers to ignite. Mr. Grandy can't perform this Zippo trick, but then back when he worked for Etch-A-Sketch, he says, he couldn't keep up with the members of the company's Employees' Drawing Club. "People in the club could do things like stop the line and start it somewhere else," he said. "I couldn't do that, either." —ROBERT SULLIVAN

ASK MR. SCIENCE

How would a crime laboratory test a garment for traces of DNA?

According to Dr. Charlotte Word and Mark Stolorow, of Cellmark Diagnostics, first, the dress in question is stretched out and secured to a sterile surface, such as a stainless-steel table. "Sometimes you can see a crust or a discoloration," Dr. Word says, "but sometimes you can't." Then, technicians scan the garment with ultraviolet light, which causes biological matter on the fabric to glow an iridescent hue. The investigators cut away a sample of the glowing material with a sterilized scalpel and saturate the swatch with a reagent solution of sodium alpha-naphthyl phosphate. After a second reagent is added, a change of color indicates the presence of the suspect matter. Fibres from the affected area are then immersed in a test tube containing a solution of DTT and sodium dodecyl sulfate, which releases DNA for further analysis. DNA is remarkably resilient and commonly survives for decades—which should be just about enough time for Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr to conclude his inquiry. —JANE MAYER



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THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE PERJURY TRAP

In the wake of Monica Lewinsky's deal for immunity, President Clinton may yet get caught in a lie. But are all lies equal?

BY JEFFREY ROSEN

EVER since Kenneth Starr, the Whitewater independent counsel, turned his attention from a questionable land deal in Arkansas to the President's relationship with a former White House intern, he has insisted that his investigation is about lies, not sex. In his famous speech to a gathering of North Carolina lawyers in June—the one in which he likened himself to Atticus Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird"—Starr singled out "truth" as "the legal system's abiding value." He went on to explain, "Imagine the disaster that would consume . . . our society if lawyers let down their moral guard and simply shrugged when clients . . . commit perjury."

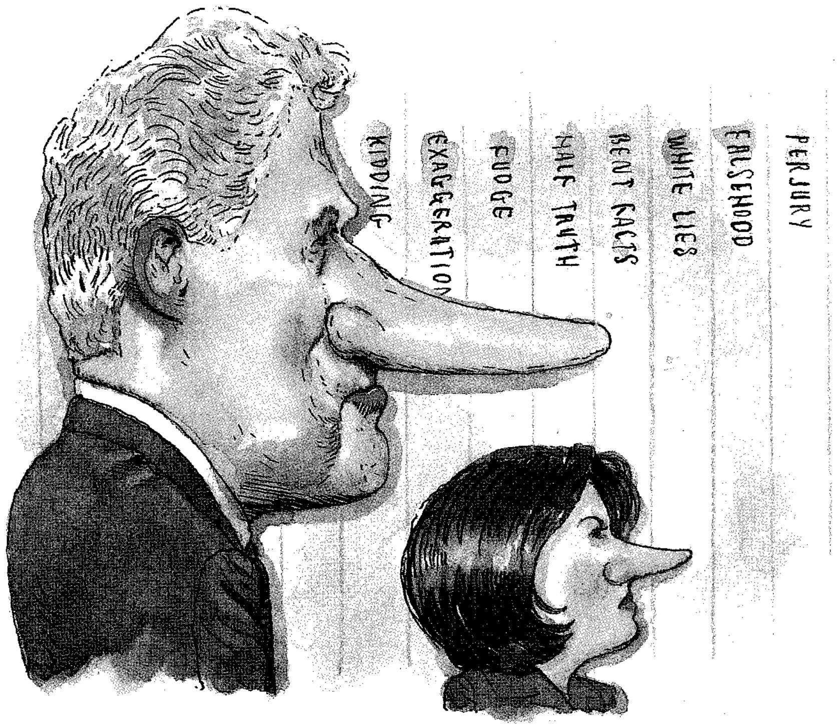
Whatever the nature of that disaster, no one can accuse Starr of not trying to avert it. Over the past seven months, his office has issued scores of subpoenas and taken hundreds of hours of testimony in an effort to prove that President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky lied under oath in the Paula Jones case, and that they asked other people to do so as well. Last week, Starr's labors reached a feverish culmination. Lewinsky, fearing that she might be indicted for perjury, allegedly told prosecutors that she and Clinton had had a sexual relationship after all, and that they had discussed how to conceal it. The next day, Clinton himself agreed to give videotaped testimony to Starr on Monday, August 17th.

In Washington, these developments were received breathlessly, as a legal Götterdämmerung. What the President's critics regard as his antagonistic relationship with the truth finally appeared to be catching up to him. Lurid relics of the scandal's early weeks—the dress, the gifts, the phone messages—came washing back up like medical waste at the beach. And the scandal once again became the city's overwhelming obsession, the White House's all-encompassing nightmare, and the one and only topic of the media's nonstop punditry.

One poll showed overwhelming approval for Clinton's reluctant decision to tell his story at last, but there was no evidence to suggest that the public had budged in its assessment of the Starr investigation. The independent counsel and the general public, it seems, disagree over the value of sexual discretion. The public appears to recognize instinctively what the law has long acknowledged: that lies vary in degree and in kind, and that they should be treated accordingly. American prosecutors and judges have traditionally made allowances for human frailty. They have examined a liar's state of mind, the seriousness of the lie, and the lie's effect on other people before deciding which lies deserve to be punished. For this reason, in the wake of Lewinsky's immunity deal the President's fate ultimately may turn not on whether he has lied but on whether or not Congress concludes that the lies in question constitute the high crimes and misdemeanors envisaged in the impeachment clause of the Constitution.

Clinton said in his sworn deposition to lawyers in the Paula Jones case in January that he "never had sexual relations" with Lewinsky. This could be a whopper of the first order, but to convince Congress that it is also a serious crime will not be easy, particularly given that the Jones case has been dismissed. For a statement to count as perjury, it must be both intentional and "material." A few weeks ago, a person close to the President's legal team suggested that the President could plausibly maintain that he believed his statement to be true when he made it, because "there's a lot of running room in the deposition." Jones's lawyers were uncomfortable talking about sex and did a "lousy job" in pressing the President for details, this person declared, explaining, "They did not say, 'Did you kiss her? Did you touch her? Did she kiss you? Did she touch you?' " Then, referring in particular to Jones's attorney Jim Fisher, this person added, "I don't think he had it in him to say, 'Mr. President, did you get a blow job?' "

To prove that any lies by Clinton were material, Starr would have to show that they were important enough to have influenced the Jones case at the time they were told. In other words, Starr would have to present the theory—put forward by Jones's attorneys and rejected by the judge in the case—that Clinton made a habit of rewarding women who had sex with him and punishing women who rebuffed him. This, of course, would embarrass the President, but it might not prove any more persuasive to Congress than it did to the judge.



In today's judicial climate, misstatements of fact aren't necessarily illegal. Lies have to be both intentional and material—and that's where Clinton may have wiggle room.

BARRY BLITT

The President's aides fear, however, that Starr will also try to set a so-called perjury trap in order to catch the President in lies told directly to the grand jury. This could happen if Starr questions Lewinsky and uses her statements, and evidence corroborating them, to disprove Clinton's testimony. Perjury traps have become a popular tactic among independent counsels: if they can't prove the alleged crime they were appointed to investigate, they indict suspects for lying to investigators. But the traps are effective only because independent counsels have succeeded over the past few decades in expanding the lying laws far beyond their historical roots.

Historically, American law has been sensitive to distinctions among different kinds of lies, and has refused to punish people for answering questions untruthfully that by any civilized standard should never have been asked in the first place. It's only in the post-Watergate era that almost any misrepresentation to a federal official has become a potential felony. As a result, there is now a gap between the kinds of lies that most people think should be illegal and the kinds that the law actually forbids. When critics of Starr's investigation lament the criminalization of sex and the criminalization of politics, therefore, they are missing an equally disturbing legal change: the indiscriminate criminalization of lying. What Starr really represents, one might say, is the insidious transformation of the Office of the Independent Counsel into a Ministry of Truth.

THE notion that some lies are worse than others is intuitively obvious. Sissela Bok, in her book "Lying," notes that "it has been thought worse to plan to lie than to do so on the spur of the moment; worse to induce others to lie . . . than to do so oneself; worse to lie to those with a right to truthful information than to others; worse to lie to those who have entrusted you with their confidence about matters important to them than to your enemies."

Some theologians and philosophers have argued that it can be permissible for one to lie or to equivocate when one is asked inappropriate questions about one's private life by people who have no moral right to the information. In "A Treatise of Equivocation" Henry Garnet, the sixteenth-century English Jesuit, urged his fellow-Catholics, when forced by Protestant inquisitors to give sworn testimony about their religious beliefs, to add a silent mental reservation, audible to God but not to the court, that would spare them from the eternal damnation reserved for those who violate an oath to God to tell the whole truth. Indeed, for most of English and American history, defendants were not put under oath in the first place, because it was considered a form of moral torture to force them to choose between self-incrimination, on the one hand, and eternal damnation, on the other. In a similar concession to the human instinct for self-preservation, prosecutors almost never pursue a perjury charge once a defendant who has proclaimed his innocence on the stand is found guilty. "Back in eternal-damnation days, they'd burn the person for the substantive crime and let God take care of punishing perjury," says David Luban, who teaches legal ethics at Georgetown.

Because defendants were viewed as inherently unreliable, their testimony, unlike that of witnesses, was not taken under oath until after the Civil War. The way that reform came about was not exactly a model of enlightenment. After Reconstruction, Southern states were forced to repeal laws that had prohibited African-Americans from appearing as witnesses in court. As blacks began to sue to enforce their newly acquired rights, racist white Southerners worried that juries might be more likely to believe a black witness who had sworn to the truth of his testimony than a white defendant who had not. So at the end of the nineteenth century Southern states began to introduce the defendant's oath. The famous perjury trials in America, from Alger Hiss to H. R. Haldeman, are twentieth-century affairs.

THE most dramatic expansion of the American law of lying, however, has taken place in the post-Watergate era—after the passage of the Independent Counsel Act, in 1978. The independent counsels' best friend has turned out to be an old law called the False Statements Act, which prohibits "any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements" to federal officials, even if the statements weren't made under oath. Originally adopted during the New Deal to cover any statements by citizens to government agencies, the law was invoked during the nineteen-eighties and nineties by a parade of independent counsels to punish unsworn lies to F.B.I. agents, to Congress, and, eventually, to the independent counsels themselves. As a result, the day-to-day enterprise of politics has become a very risky affair.

Lawrence Walsh, the independent counsel in the Iran-Contra investigation, not only prosecuted Oliver North and John Poindexter for lying to Congress but also indicted Elliott Abrams simply for withholding information from Congress. "I didn't think it was novel," Walsh told me recently, in a slightly defensive tone. "North lied his head off about what he was doing for the Contras." A Washington, D.C., jury, however, refused to convict North for lying to Congress. "I think juries had the instinct that denying your guilt was less heinous than other things," Walsh acknowledged. "If you're lying to hurt somebody else, lying to get someone convicted of murder falsely, that's one thing," he said, noting that juries might be more sympathetic "when you're just trying to avoid going to jail yourself, or not admitting something."

During the past few decades, judges, too, have begun to worry about the fairness of prosecuting people for the natural impulse to deny their guilt. Everyone expects a suspect to lie on being cornered, after all. To prevent unscrupulous prosecutors from snagging their targets this way, several federal courts carved out an exception to the False Statements Act, which they called the "exculpatory no." According to the "exculpatory no" doctrine, if you do nothing more than deny your guilt, without actively misleading federal investigators, you haven't committed a federal felony. In a typical case from the nineteen-eighties, an I.R.S. agent discovered that a notary public in Florida had notarized a deed even though the signatories hadn't personally appeared before her, as Florida law required. The agent showed up at the notary's house and, without warning, asked her whether she was guilty; when she said no, she was prosecuted for making a false statement. An appellate court reversed the conviction, holding that it wasn't fair to inflate a violation of state law into a federal felony by entrapping a suspect in a lie that didn't really fool anyone.

The "exculpatory no" doctrine was an effort by judges to be more realistic about which lies deserve to be punished and which do not, but that effort turned out to be short-lived. Last January, in Brogan v. U.S., the Supreme Court ruled that lower-court judges had exceeded their authority by creating an "exculpatory no" exception. In that case, federal agents had shown up on the doorstep of a union official and accused him of receiving cash from his corporate bosses. When he denied having done so, he was prosecuted under the False Statements Act, whereupon he raised the "exculpatory no" defense. Writing for the court, Justice Antonin Scalia declared that the False Statements Act doesn't make any exception for self-protective lies. In a separate opinion, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg worried that "an overzealous prosecutor or investigator—aware that a person has committed some suspicious acts, but unable to make a criminal case—will create a crime by surprising the suspect, asking about those

"I'm really proud of my daughter. She's a thorn in the side of the patriarchy."

acts, and receiving a false denial."

As it happens, it was the Justice Department of the Clinton Administration that urged the Court to close the "exculpatory no" loophole. Now the Exculpator-in-Chief may suffer as a result. There is, after all, an almost palpable sense of entitlement to lie when one is asked point-blank about sex, and that's one reason federal officials have traditionally been disinclined to investigate sexual indiscretions. ("There were awkward personal relationships that we knew of," Lawrence Walsh says of the Iran-Contra inquiry. "We wouldn't even question someone about it to begin with.") So in a situation in which any lie to a federal official is a crime, any government inquiry that strays into the area of sexual behavior is apt to become a self-fuelling machine for producing felonies.

"Your pot o' gold is doing nothing for you sitting at the end of the rainbow. At the very least, you should put it in a no-risk interest-bearing account."

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In a recently published book, "The Appearance of Impropriety," Glenn Reynolds and Peter Morgan, former colleagues at the University of Tennessee College of Law, warn that the expansion of the False Statements Act means that even innocent people are subject to potential felony investigations every time they are questioned by federal officials. The Supreme Court has gone so far as to suggest that you don't even have to know that someone is a federal agent to be prosecuted for lying. Under this reasoning, Chief Justice Rehnquist warned, someone who lies to a neighbor about how many children she has could ultimately be prosecuted as a felon if the neighbor turns out to be a census official.

Until now, though, it has been rare for federal prosecutors to indict people for lying about sex in dismissed civil cases—as critics of the Starr investigation have regularly noted. Starr's defenders have been eager to counter this criticism. In June, the editors at the conservative *Weekly Standard* suddenly discovered a 1998 federal-court case called U.S. v. Battalino. In an editorial entitled "Bill Clinton: This Precedent's For You," the *Standard* wrote that a Veterans' Administration psychiatrist named Barbara Battalino resigned after her supervisors learned that she was having an affair with one of her patients, a man named Edward Arthur. Arthur sued for medical malpractice, but Battalino maintained that the sexual relationship didn't begin until July, 1991, when Arthur was no longer in her care. During a courtroom hearing on July 14, 1995, Battalino was asked, "Did anything of a sexual nature take place in your office on June 27, 1991?" She replied, "No, sir." But, in a Linda Tripp-like turn, Arthur had secretly recorded a telephone conversation in which Battalino rebuked him for telling a friend about their office trysts. In April, 1998, the Justice Department, armed with the tapes, alleged that Battalino had obstructed justice by falsely denying that she had "performed oral sex" on Arthur in her office. Shortly afterward, Battalino pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice.

Of course, Battalino's attempt to hide the timing of her sexual encounter with Arthur went to the very heart of the case against her, and was therefore far more material than Clinton's statements about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, which were peripheral, at best, to the Paula Jones case. Lewinsky hasn't charged the President with sexual harassment, yet Starr seems determined to catch them in a lie, even about consensual sex. Traditionally, "obstruction of justice required active misleading," as Albert Alschuler, of the University of Chicago, puts it. "If you said your brother was in Alaska when he was, in fact, in a back room, that might be obstruction, but simply saying 'No, I didn't do it' wouldn't count."

In the United States, laws that require the courts to parse the intentions of two parties in a sexual encounter have not fared well. In the nineteenth century, American states allowed women or their fathers to sue men for seduction and breach of promise of marriage. Beginning in the nineteen-twenties, however, these "heart-balm laws" came to be seen as blackmail tools and were opposed by progressive-era feminists, who refused to regard women as helpless victims. In most parts of the country, the laws were abolished, but they remain on the books in seventeen states and in the District of Columbia, and in recent years a small but ferocious outpost of feminist legal thinking has tried to resurrect them. "I think there should be a tort of seduction," Gloria Allred, the feminist litigator who has represented the aggrieved lovers of Dodi Al Fayed and of Marv Albert, told me. But the vast majority of lawyers agree with Allred's law partner, Michael Maroko, that sex-fraud laws that try to criminalize romantic lies are "a can of worms that's best left outside the courts."

The Pentagon learned this lesson after it charged First Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, an Air Force pilot, with adultery and lying. A sympathetic public forgave her for believing the lies of her married lover and for lying herself once the affair was exposed. The case was a public-relations disaster. Last week, the Pentagon issued guidelines stating that adultery should be subject to criminal charges only if it disrupted or discredited the military

Like the neo-Victorian feminists, however, Kenneth Starr still wants the law to treat all lies alike: he refuses to recognize that the legal system is ill equipped to deconstruct someone's state of mind in a sexual relationship. When Paula Jones's lawyers questioned the President about Lewinsky, they did not pose a lot of specific questions. Instead, they presented him with a written definition—one that proved, if proof were needed, that if you're in the market for erotica don't call your lawyer. "For the purposes of this deposition," the definition read, "a person engages in 'sexual relations' when the person knowingly engages in or causes (1) contact with the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of any person with an intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any person; (2) contact between any part of the person's body or an object and the genitals or anus of another person; or (3) contact between the genitals or anus of the person and any part of another person's body. 'Contact' means intentional touching, either directly or through clothing." After reading this extraordinary document, Clinton replied, "I have never had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. I've never had an affair with her." Given the tortured definition, John Whitehead, of the Rutherford Institute, which is funding Jones's appeal, told me, the President might try to defend his statement by arguing that he hated every minute of it. Or, the person close to the President's legal team suggested, "You could say, 'I didn't remember the definition.' " As for the perjury trap, now that Lewinsky is reportedly ready to testify that she did have "a sexual relationship" with the President, he could plausibly counter that "a sexual relationship" means something different from (and presumably more gratifying than) the clinical definition of "sexual relations" that he denied. Of course, when Starr questions the President, the inquiries are likely to be *too* specific to leave any running room. In a similar situation, any suspect other than the President of the United States would be well advised to take the Fifth.

A FAMOUS political sex trial of the nineteenth century, the move to impeach Queen Caroline of England in 1820, suggests that when prosecutors try to prove adultery by subpoenaing bodyguards and confidential aides the public may be outraged.

The arranged marriage between the future King George IV and Princess Caroline of Brunswick got off to a bad start. "I am not well—pray get me a glass of brandy," the Prince murmured a few moments after being introduced to his fiancée. Once the wedding was over and the necessary business of conceiving a child had been taken care of, the heir to the throne and his wife decided to set up separate households. Absolved of her conjugal duties, Caroline eventually left the country for a five-and-a-half-year tour of the Continent, North Africa, and the Middle East. While she was in Milan, she appointed as her "cabinet-courier" an Italian manservant named Bartolommeo Pergami, and rumors of their debaucheries soon made their way back to London. When Caroline returned to England, after the death of George III, the new King asked Parliament to impeach Caroline for "a licentious, disgraceful, and adulterous intercourse," and to dissolve their marriage and deprive her of her title.

During the hearings that followed, in the House of Lords, so many of the Queen's bodyguards, chambermaids, and travelling companions were ordered to testify that her lawyer charged that there was a vast Italian "conspiracy" against her. A confidential servant named Theodore Majocchi reported that on a sailing ship from Jaffa to Italy the Princess had slept with Pergami in a shipboard tent and that he had heard "the creaking of a bench." A royal chambermaid, Louisa Demont, said that she had seen semen-stained sheets.

The Queen's lawyers made much of the prosecution's refusal to call the lady-in-waiting who was alleged to have made the incriminating bed. Thomas Denman, the Queen's counsel, thundered, in his summation, "Did their lordships suppose that those agents who had collected together a set of her Majesty's discarded servants, who had ransacked filthy clothes-bags, who had raked into every sewer, pried into every water-closet, who attempted to destroy all the secrecies of private life . . . did their lordships imagine that they who had resorted to such mean and filthy practices would have stopped short at producing" the witness who could "prove the marks?"

A slim majority of the Lords voted for the bill to impeach the Queen, but it was shelved at the last minute, because of angry demonstrations in the streets. The people's support for Caroline, her biographer, Roger Fulford, writes, reflected "not so much the belief in the innocence of the Queen . . . as a revulsion against authority." After her prosecution was abandoned, delirious Londoners cheered her in the streets. But President Clinton should be wary. Eight months later, when Caroline's husband was formally crowned King and she attempted to force her way into Westminster Abbey, the mob blocked her entrance with cries of "Shame! Shame!" The Queen had confused the crowd's dislike of her tormentors with affection for her. ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

[*From the Ventura* (*Calif.*) *County Star*]

A sentence in Andrea Nagy's Jan. 18 Pulse page commentary, "Sick people have a right to medicinal pot," should have read: "The protection of patients, caregivers and physicians will remain one of our primary concerns."

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CASUAL

SWIMMING WITH CANOES

Invisible to the upside, outside world.

BY JOHN McPHEE

I GREW up in a summer camp—Keewaydin—whose specialty was canoes and canoe travel. At the home base, near Middlebury, Vermont, were racks and racks of canoes, at least a hundred canoes—E. M. Whites and Old Town Guides, mainly. They were very good wood-and-canvas keeled or keelless canoes, lake or river canoes. We were in them every day wherever we were, in and out of Vermont. We were like some sort of crustaceans with our rib-and-planking exoskeletons, and to this day I do not feel complete or safe unless I am surrounded by the protective shape of a canoe.

Now and again, Keewaydin let us take our canoes not so much onto the water as into it, during swim period. We went swimming with our canoes. We jounced. Jouncing is the art of propelling a canoe without a paddle. You stand up on the gunwales near the stern deck and repeatedly flex and unflex your knees. The canoe rocks, slaps the lake, moves forward. Sooner or later, you lose your balance and fall into the water, because the gunwales are slender rails and the stern deck is somewhat smaller than a pennant. From waters deeper than you were tall, you climbed back into your canoe. If you think that's easy, try it.

After three or four splats, and with a belly pink from hauling it over gunwales, you lost interest in jouncing. What next? You sat in your canoe and deliberately overturned it. You leaned hard to one side, grabbed the opposite gunwale, and pulled. Out you went, and into the water. This was, after all, swim period. Now you rolled your canoe—an action it resists far less when it is loaded with water. You could make your canoe spiral like a football inside the lake.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

And before long you found the air pocket. Having jounced and spiralled to the far end of your invention span, you ducked beneath the surface and swam in under your upside-down canoe. You rose slowly to miss a thwart—feeling above you, avoiding a bump on the head—and then your eyes, nose, mouth were in air, among chain-link streaks of white and amber light, the shimmers of reflection in a quonset grotto. Its vertical inches were few but enough. Your pals got in there with you and your voices were tympanic in the grotto. Or you just hung out under there by yourself. With a hand on a thwart, and your feet slowly kicking, you could breathe normally, see normally, talk abnormally, and wait indefinitely for a change of mood. You were invisible to the upside, outside world. Even more than when kneeling in a fast current, you were one with your canoe.

Kneeling in a fast current. Once in a while, we went to what is now called Battell Gorge, north of Middlebury, to learn to deal with really fast, pounding, concentrated flow. Otter Creek, there, undergoes an abrupt change in physiographic character. After meandering benignly through the marshes, woodlots, and meadows of the Champlain Valley, it encounters a large limestone outcrop, which it deeply bisects. By a factor of three or four, the stream narrows and the water squeezes into humps, haystacks, souse holes, and standing waves as it drops ten feet in a hundred yards. Then it emerges from the high limestone walls and the darkness of overhanging hemlocks into the light of a pool so wide it seems to be a pond.

Like horse people, we showed up some distance above the head of the gorge with trailers—racked trailers that each carried seven canoes. The gorge was a good place to learn how to deal with canoes in white water because it was violent but short. In that narrow, roaring flume, you didn't have to choose the best route—didn't have to look for what the *voyageurs* called the *fil d'eau.* There was pretty much one way to go. But you got the sense of a canoe flying in three dimensions; and the more you did it the slower it seemed, the shoot separating itself into distinct parts, as if you were in a balloon rising in sunlight and falling in the shadows of clouds.

ONE time, when I was about twelve, I went into the gorge in a very old Old Town Guide that was missing its stern seat. (We didn't take the better boats there.) Two of us were paddling it. I was kneeling against the stern thwart, which was so far back it was only eight or ten inches from gunwale to gunwale, the size of my young butt. My right knee was on the canoe's ribs, and my right leg extended so far back that my foot was wedged in the V of the stern when the bucking canoe turned over. Billy Furey was my partner, and we were doing all we could to keep things even, but whatever we did wasn't good enough, and we flipped near the top of the gorge. Billy was ejected. Among the countless wonders of the simple design of the native American canoe is the fact that it ejects its paddlers when it capsizes.

This one could not eject me, because my foot was stuck. I struggled to pull the foot free, but it wouldn't come. Upside down in billows of water, I could not get out. Understand: I have a lifelong tendency to panic. Almost anything will panic me—health, money, working with words. Almost anything—I'm here to tell you—but an overturned canoe in a raging gorge. When I was trapped in there, if panic crossed my mind it went out the other side. I had, after all, time and time again been swimming with canoes. There was purpose in letting us do that—a thought that had never occurred to me. After I realized I was caught and was not going to be coming out from under that canoe, I reached for the stern quarter-thwart, took hold of it, and pulled my body upward until my eyes, nose, and mouth were in the grotto. There, in the dancing light, I rode on through the gorge, and when the water calmed down at the far end I gave the canoe half a spiral and returned to the open sunlight. ♦

TO TELEVISION

Not a "window on the world"
But as we call you,
A box a tube

Terrarium of dreams and wonders.
Coffer of shades, ordained
Cotillion of phosphors
Or liquid crystal

Homey miracle, tub
Of acquiescence, vein of defiance.
Your patron in the pantheon would be Hermes

Raster dance,
Quick one, little thief, escort
Of the dying and comfort of the sick,

In a blue glow my father and little sister sat
Snuggled in one chair watching you
Their wife and mother was sick in the head
I scorned you and them as I scorned so much

Now I like you best in a hotel room,
Maybe minutes
Before I have to face an audience: behind
The doors of the armoire, box
Within a box—Tom & Jerry, or also brilliant
And reassuring, Oprah Winfrey.

Thank you, for I watched, I watched
Sid Caesar speaking French and Japanese not
Through knowledge but imagination,
His quickness, and Thank you, I watched live
Jackie Robinson stealing home.

Home, the image—O strung shell—enduring
Fleeter than light like these words we
Remember in: they too are winged
At the helmet and ankles.

—Robert Pinsky

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COP DIARY

THE WORD ON THE STREET

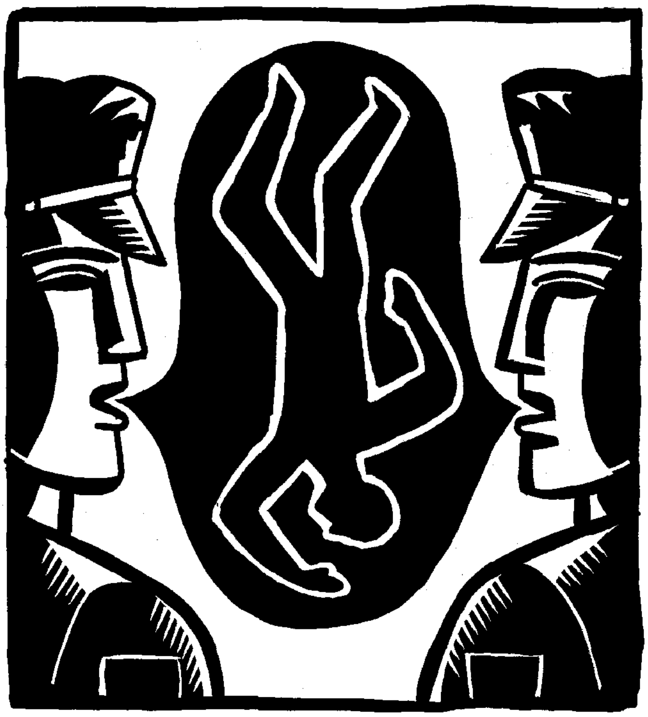
What a cop says and how he says it can matter more than his stick or his gun.

BY MARCUS LAFFEY

We say "K." It means that a radio transmission is over. The military—and just about everyone else—says "Over," and I don't know if the N.Y.P.D. has any argument for the difference except difference's sake. I'm a patrolman, so I do what I'm told. "You O.K.? K." "A-O.K., K." It is a code, after all, and a code communicates confidentially, which is to say that it's supposed to mean nothing to most people: codes, like good children, don't talk to strangers. But talk they do—so much so that here, behind the vaunted "blue wall of silence," it's often hard to get a word in edgewise.

If the N.Y.P.D. is becoming less and less of a fraternity, it will remain a kind of ethnicity, because ethnicity is defined by language. An arrest is a "collar," but also a "pinch"; a perp can be a "skell" or a "mope," depending on whether he's a bum or a thug. A D.O.A. is someone who's gone E.O.T., end of tour. "Two under" or "Ten under" is an accounting of collars, but in Transit a "man under" is not under arrest but under a train. The police department, perhaps because of its paramilitary nature, has a fondness for acronyms, which vary from the flat-footedly functional to the downright cool: the Robbery Apprehension Module descended from the Robbery Identification Program, which broadened the range of the Senior Citizens Robbery Unit. And thus SCRU begat RIP, and RIP begat RAM, with a certain loss of panache.

There's an oddity to cop talk, coming as it does from the shotgun marriage of street slang and legalese. The raw talk of criminals, victims, and the cops themselves is framed in the jury-rigged particularity of statutory phrases: "The alleged perpetrator called him a 'bitch-ass punk' and mooshed him, causing annoyance and alarm." To moosh is to shove in the face, and is almost more demeaning than a slap, because of the suggestion that there is no need to add injury to insult. Naturally, cops pick up a lot of criminal vocabulary, especially in the drug trade, where the criminal words for things are the only words there are; you can say, "He was holding a deck," or you can say, "He was holding a glassine envelope of a white powdery substance . . . alleged and believed to be heroin." Crack isn't usually packaged in vials anymore but in miniature heat-sealed plastic bags, which the dealers call "slabs." The official and legal term for them is "slabs" as well. To make a rule of this kind of exception would lead to indictments that read, "To wit, defendant did possess one mad fat rock of yayo."



Cop talk is a shotgun marriage of street slang and legalese: "The alleged perp mooshed him, causing annoyance and alarm."

New York cops and robbers used to sound more like James Cagney or the Bowery Boys. In recent decades, the accent has grown softer, but the dialect has got bigger, blockbusted with words and rhythms from the barrio and the 'hood, so that you can hear "Yo! Yo! Yo!" and "Fuhgeddaboudit!" not only in the same conversation but from the same mouth. And the accent is by no means gone. I recently overheard a two-minute conversation between cops which looped around one word:

"He robbed a pawn store."
"A porn store?"
"Yeah, a pawn store."
"Right, porn."
"Pawn."
"Porn . . . o?"

Usually, though, the babel of the city just mixes with police jargon in striking ways as we all strive to express ourselves with bits of a hand-me-down language which don't always fit. I was once working with an informant to obtain a search warrant for a drug dealer's house. She was a strange creature, a dedicated and unapologetic crackhead who now and then felt the inclination to turn in a dealer "for the mood of it." One day when she strolled into the precinct another cop alerted me to her arrival, calling out, "Hey, your girlfriend's here." She then remarked, with neither pride nor shame in the fact that her better days were behind her, "He don't want this twisted ass." And so this confidential informant, or C.I., or Charlie Ida, became known as Twisted Ass, and the successful warrant we executed was dubbed Operation Twisted Ass. There are also times, though, when the clipped neutrality of police jargon sounds weirdly euphemistic, as if the speaker were keeping a lifted-pinky distance from lurid circumstances. I heard a dispatcher revise an assignment for a patrol car: "Be advised, unit, that domestic dispute is now coming over as a severed limb." And I overheard a cop recall, brightly, "Oh, sure, I was the first nonfatal shooting of 1994! In the keister!"

Some cop talk, of course, is *too* colorful. At the police academy, an instructor once told us, "There's one word that,

ANTHONY RUSSO

if cops never used it at all, would do away with eighty per cent of civilian complaints." He paused for a response, and we shouted in cheerful unison, "Asshole!" He smiled. "Correct."

The department now trains its members in "verbal judo," a daylong course in how certain phrases and attitudes can shape interactions with the public. (A cop I know made a happy slip of the tongue, calling it "gerbil voodoo.") Although there shouldn't be any need to tell cops not to be rude, the program expounds on the strategic asset of good manners, advising a conversational stance that is plain, even obvious, and relentlessly polite. You talk through everything, explaining who you are and what you're doing and, when faced with some form of noncompliance, you lay out the good and bad options available to both of you:

"Good afternoon, sir. I'm P.O. Laffey of the N.Y.P.D. I'm stopping you for running a red light. Is there any reason I should know . . .

"I understand you pay my salary, sir, but I still need to see your license . . .

"Sir, if you give me your license you can be on your way in a minute, but if you don't I'll have to bring you in."

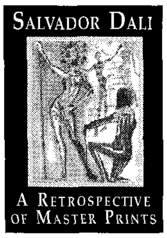
The protocol does work to reduce the stress of such encounters, even if its Robocop Berlitz seems more suited to traffic stops than to heated domestic disputes. You obviously don't begin a car stop with the phrase "Where's the fire, Grampa?" But you also don't say "You know why I pulled you over, right?" because the driver might think it has something to do with the bank he's just robbed, resulting in an exchange of gunfire instead of information.

If you can talk a good game as a cop, you're halfway there. The police work of action—of confrontation and force, of roundhouse punches and high-speed chases—is what makes the movies and the news, and both civilian lives and our own sometimes depend on it. But what you say and how you say it come into play far more than anything you do with your stick or your gun, and can even prevent the need for them. I know cops who have talked would-be suicides down from rooftops and convinced raving gunmen to release child hostages. More often, you talk people into talking—just talking, instead of screaming and waving a two-by-four. There are fighting words and the opposite: passwords that most people seem to have—some topic or tone that cuts them short or brings them down, reaches them through reason, decency, or shame. I once watched an eight-year-old boy silence a foul-mouthed drunk in a pizza parlor by barking at him, like a headmaster, "Hey! There's ladies here!"

And talk tactics aren't confined to the street. Most robberies and all drug deals are committed by members of a felony society, from suppliers and fences to all manner of partners in crime. They know people, know things. And, with every arrest, you make the time to persuade them to share that knowledge. The classic interrogation, where the detectives sweet-talk, bluff, and browbeat the perp into an admission of guilt, is seldom a part of what a patrol cop does. But when a perp wants to talk, naturally, you accommodate him.

The first time I read someone the Miranda warnings, I had a hard time keeping a straight face; it sounded like a Joe Friday impersonation. More to the point, in my cases, self-incrimination is rarely an issue. As I tell them, "I don't need anything out of you, I already have you. If you don't want to be had anymore, give me someone better. You're not going anywhere." The methods of persuasion are varied in style and efficiency, as any adman, politician, or whiny child can attest. You might try to create an intense emotional climate that permits a moment of surrender; more frequently, you gain coöperation through the opposite means, by presenting it as the rational choice. You wheedle, enlighten, repeat. I've heard the sum of these techniques referred to as "jerkology."

When I tried to flip Anna (all the names in this piece, including my own, have been changed), a heroin dealer I had arrested, the first ten minutes brought nothing. She was a hard-core junkie, an operator with such mileage on her that the first word that came to me when I saw her was "survivor," though it should have been the last. She didn't look just dirty but dusty, as if she'd been left in an attic, and she had ulcerated limbs that looked as if someone had taken bites out of them. On being questioned about whether she knew anyone who had guns or was doing robberies, she offered a bored de-



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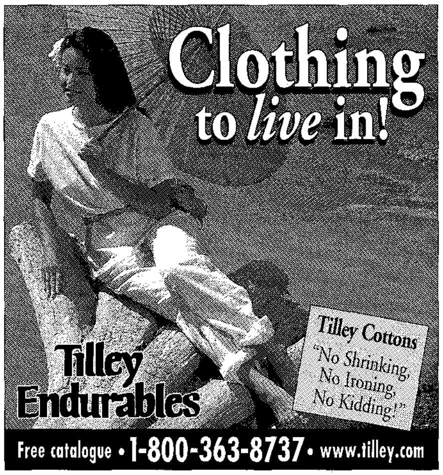
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nial, and when she was asked about the heroin spot where she worked she just shook her head. I knew she had done state time, and I also knew a bit about the setup where she worked—the brands, the players, the hours. Debriefings are like poker: you have to get the perp to stay in the game, even though it's clear that you're the better player, with the better hand. It's also unlike poker, in that if you play well you both win.

"Anna, there's only one way you can make this go away. You know that, right? It's through us, right? Talking, helping us out? It's not through J.J. We know him, too, and know you work for him. Today, he was hanging on the corner while you were running your ass ragged taking money and handing out bags of dope. And you're in cuffs and he's home, watching 'Oprah.' Yeah, Anna, it's four o'clock already! You moved a couple hundred decks this morning for J.J.—ten bucks each, that's a couple grand. How much did he pay you, fifty bucks? Or did he just throw you a couple of bags for yourself? Is he gonna send a lawyer down for you, is he gonna water your plants while you're away?"

But she didn't reply. I asked her about prison, and she said she didn't like it much. She still owed time for parole, and she'd have to do that even before she did what she'd get for today. She knew that, she told me, but she told me nothing else. My mistake with Anna was to keep pitching appeals to her freedom. She was an addict, whose life was a closed circuit of having it and needing it, and nothing I could offer would affect her truly solitary confinement. But she'd been talking, and I wanted to keep her talking. I asked if she had kids. She flinched, and asked for another cigarette. She nodded.

I changed the subject back to her dealing that day, describing customers, lookouts, and so on—authoritative blather to lead her to believe we had her down. Then I asked her what her kids' names were. As she said them—"Fernando and Lucy"—it was as if she were watching them sleep. Then she breathed deeply, and softly began, "J.J. keeps it in the corner building, on the second floor, the first door on the right. He brings enough for the day, from another stash house in the middle of the block." At that moment, I felt that I had jerkologically *arrived.*

OFTEN the problem isn't getting people to talk but getting them to tell the truth: cops hear lies so often that they're almost background noise—an aggravating fact of the real estate, as if you lived next to the subway or the airport. I've seen liar prodigies, virtuoso liars, thinking man's liars, lowdown liars, and liars from the heart. One enormous woman bellowed at me as I took a crack vial from her open hand, "You planted that there!," which reminded me of the Richard Pryor line about a man whose wife caught him in bed with another woman: "You gonna believe me, or your lying eyes?" (My liar followed up with at least one unassailable truth: "You can't take me to jail, I don't have a bra on. Look!") My favorites are the liars who can provide limitlessly elastic explanations for why things are not the way they seem. When I arrested a heroin dealer named Ray, he explained to me that he was in the building only because he was waiting for his aunt, and that he let serial junkies in because they might know where she was, and that the reason he had more than six hundred dollars in his pocket was, obviously, that his wife just had a baby shower and it was money for a crib. . . . In another instance, a would-be informant confessed, in persuasive detail, to a spree of violent felonies, but my initial thrill at his capture melted away as hours of research failed to produce a scrap of documentary evidence of these crimes. I took consolation in considering the little miracle of his half-dozen putative victims suddenly restored to health and safety, unrobbed, unstabbed, unshot.

Most people who call the police are credible, because their reasons for doing so are obvious: they are hurt, or sick, or have had something stolen. And you encourage them to talk—to ventilate or rant in case they come up with some vital detail (my favorite witness: "He was tall! Five-ten! Maybe even five-twelve!") or, sometimes, give themselves enough rope. Everyone has the right to be heard, but no one has an absolute right to be believed.

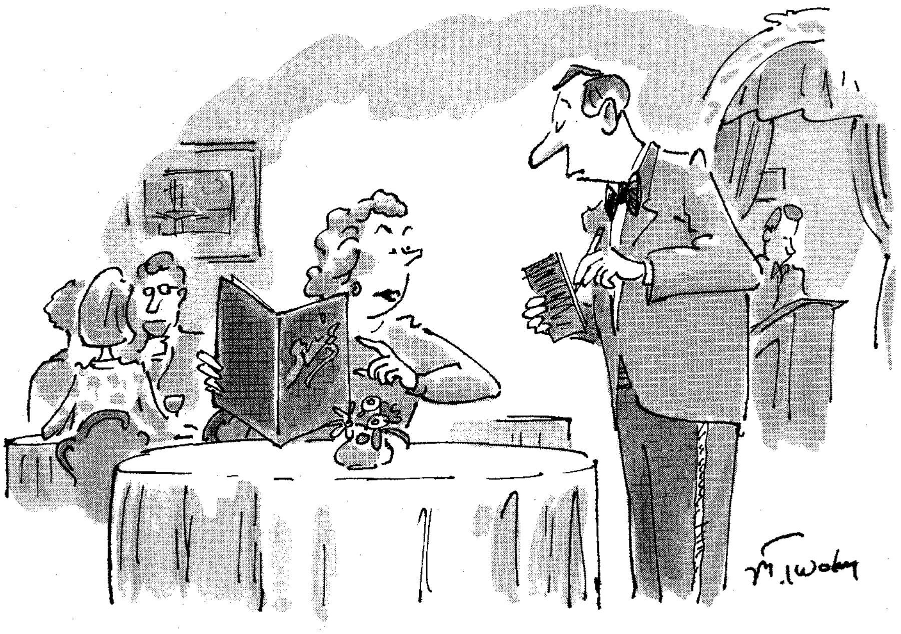
When a robbery victim told me that three white men in white suits broke into her apartment, locked her in the bathroom, and made off with her cigarettes, I felt that I had to question her further before I put out an A.P.B. for the Bee Gees. When I first suggested calling for an ambulance, she shook her head.

"Sometimes you don't know if you're hurt right away," I continued. "With the shock of it, and all, it's best to be safe and check. Are you under any kind of treatment right now, do you take any medicine?"

She nodded, and I asked what for.

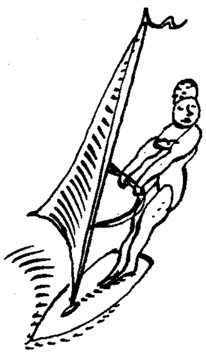
"For the voices."

You have to ask. The quality of the information you get is only as good as what you ask for, vetted through repetition and playback, prodded along for



"Do you promise to maintain strict waiter-patron confidentiality?"

further detail, probed for the soft spots in the story as if for dry rot in a wall. Even so, you should still expect to get it wrong sometimes. On patrol, you can find yourself embroiled in plotlines that if you saw them in a movie would have you flinging popcorn at the screen. When I went to testify to the grand jury after a rape arrest, I was greeted by the A.D.A. with the eight words I least expected, or wanted, to hear: "You know he has an identical twin, right?" The technical term for that kind of situation is "cluster fuck."

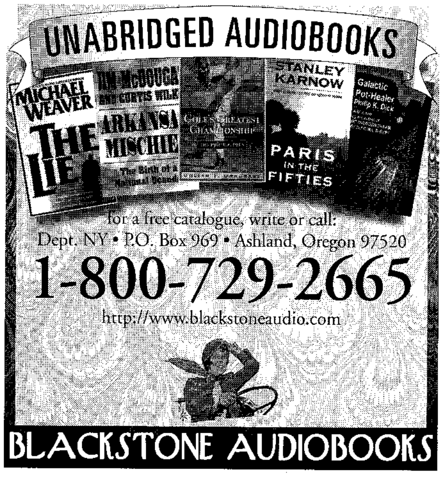


There's a biting old adage favored by cops which I admire, not least because it advises a guarded appraisal of the saying itself: "Believe half of what you see, and none of what you hear." Like a lot of cop talk, its sardonic double meaning says something and denies it at the same time. I don't mean the way cops misspeak to each other for a purpose, like when P.O. Tony tells his partner, P.O. Mike, "Hey, Pete, this guy's O.K." and he's really telling Mike that he isn't—that he has a weapon. You might better understand this ambiguity by looking at the word "buff," which can convey several shades of insult. A buff is a green idealist, and it suits a rookie to be a kind of buff, to have more heart than brains. A buff can also be a too-serious type who looks in the mirror and sees Eliot Ness, and whose ego makes him difficult, and occasionally dangerous, to work with. To say that a veteran cop is a buff can be a compliment—though one best made behind his back—because it means he's found a way to take things seriously and lightly in turn that still allows him to do good and have fun. Or it means he's a bit demented. But if the fact that it's a dig, however affectionate (a cop is entitled to buff out a little after a good collar), seems to say something cynical about cop culture, consider that the opposite of "buff" is "hairbag," which is straightforwardly bad, and means a bitter and burned-out complainer. A possible inference is that faith and doubt can be equally blind. Or you could say, "My advice is, Don't take my advice."

In this complex private language, a handful of statements remain unambiguous, however, and the radio code "10-13"—for "Officer needs assistance"—is both the plainest speech and the most forceful. Since the code "10-85" is also a call for aid, ranging from administrative assistance ("I need a unit to eighty-five me with an accident report, Central, nonemergency") to certain high levels of urgency ("Eighty-five, Central, forthwith, large crowd with baseball bats, be advised this is a solo unit"), there's an etiquette to calling a 10-13—a respect for its authority of last resort. It has elements of both shouting "Fire!" and saying the Hail Mary.

When you hear it on the radio it shuts you up and raises your heart rate: the air clears, the white noise turns church-quiet, and it's as if the hundreds of cops in a division, in all the precincts and cars and street corners for a few square miles, have gone into a sprinter's crouch. The voice that calls it can be nearly breathless with terror, and the background noise can tell of gunshots or a raving mob, but the number itself, no matter how it's spoken, has an autonomous and radical power.

I would have guessed that this particular code came from misfortune—the superstitions about the number itself—and there's a logic to that, for no one calls a 10-13 on a lucky day. But its association with disaster has given it an equally strong sense of rescue—a "10-13" is also the name for the benefit parties that cops throw for other cops, usually to help with a medical expense—thereby defining it as both the call for help and the help itself. And so I was glad to hear (from a non-cop friend, who is a bit of a buff himself) that the code has its source in a Biblical phrase. Chapter ten, verse thirteen (10:13) of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans reads, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The thought of old commissioners slyly encrypting police codes with heavenly messages is hard to resist. But I take it the way I take most everything cops say and hear—that is, everything below the level of lawful orders and sworn testimony, everything that needs to be interpreted instead of obeyed. You believe it if you like, ignore it at your risk, but listen, always, if you hope to understand. ♦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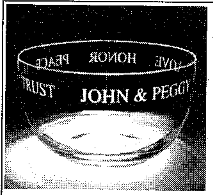

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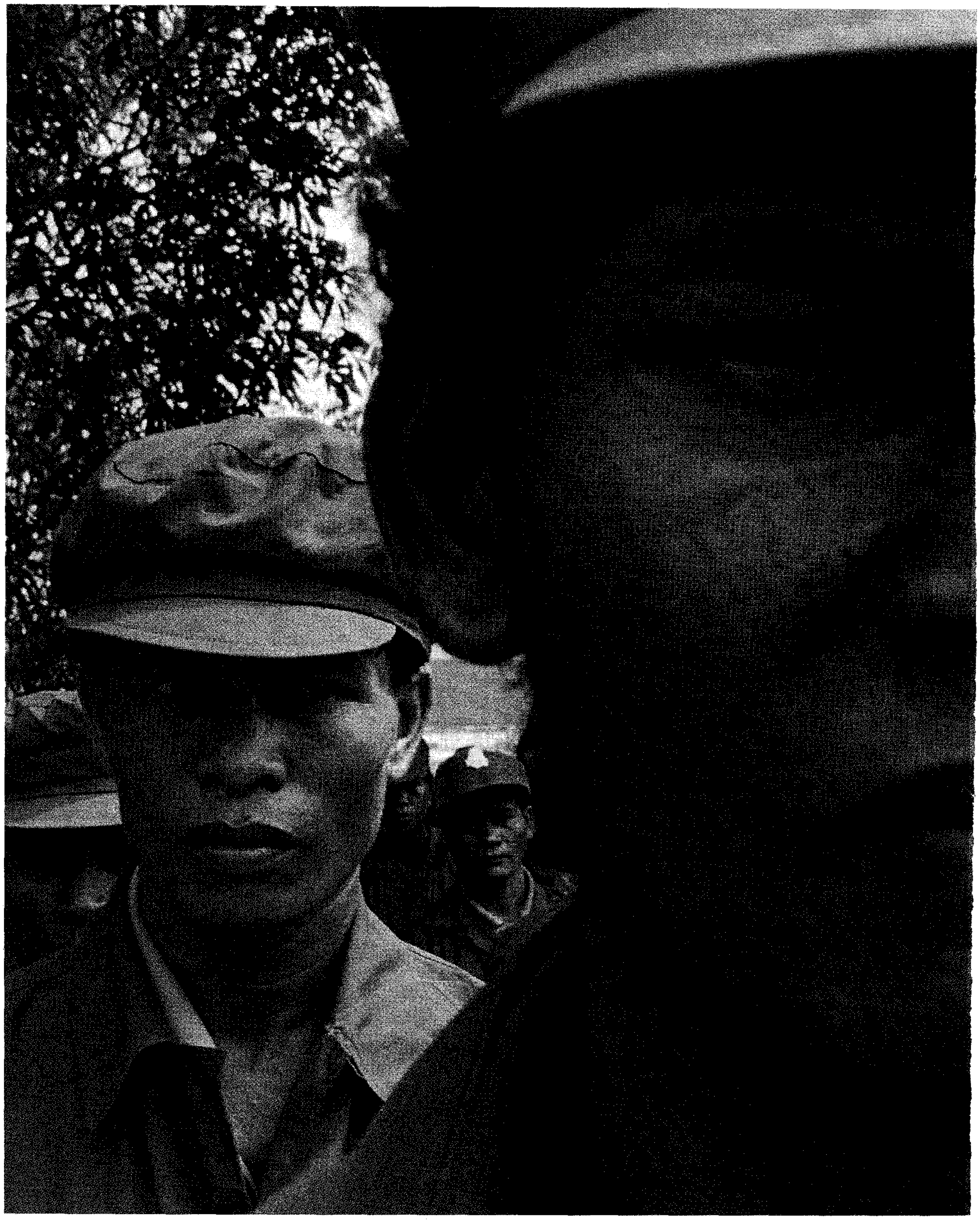
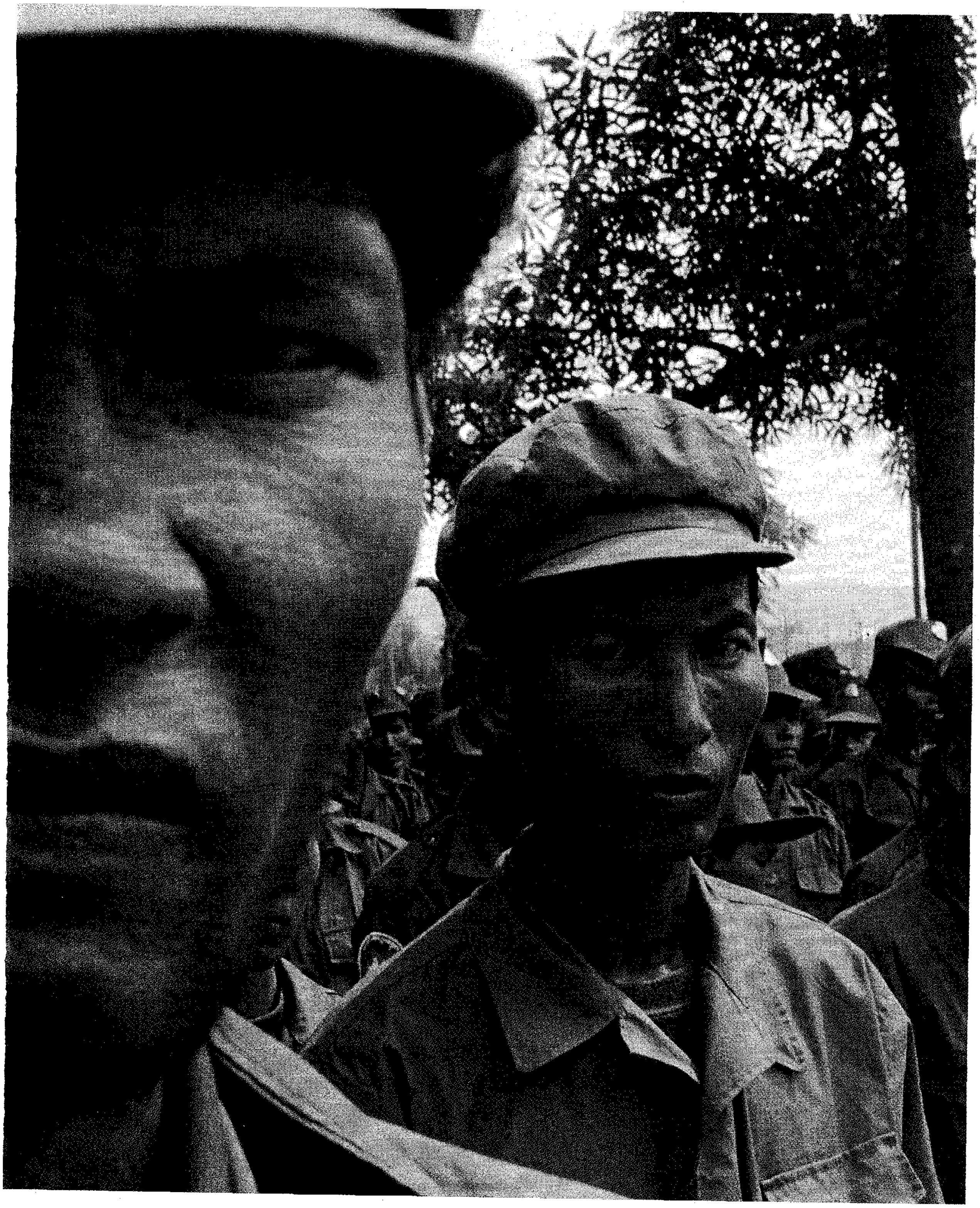


LETTER FROM CAMBODIA

POL POT'S CHILDREN

The strongman Hun Sen says he's better than the dead Khmer Rouge leader. After three decades of political violence and civil turmoil, Cambodians wonder if that's really good enough.

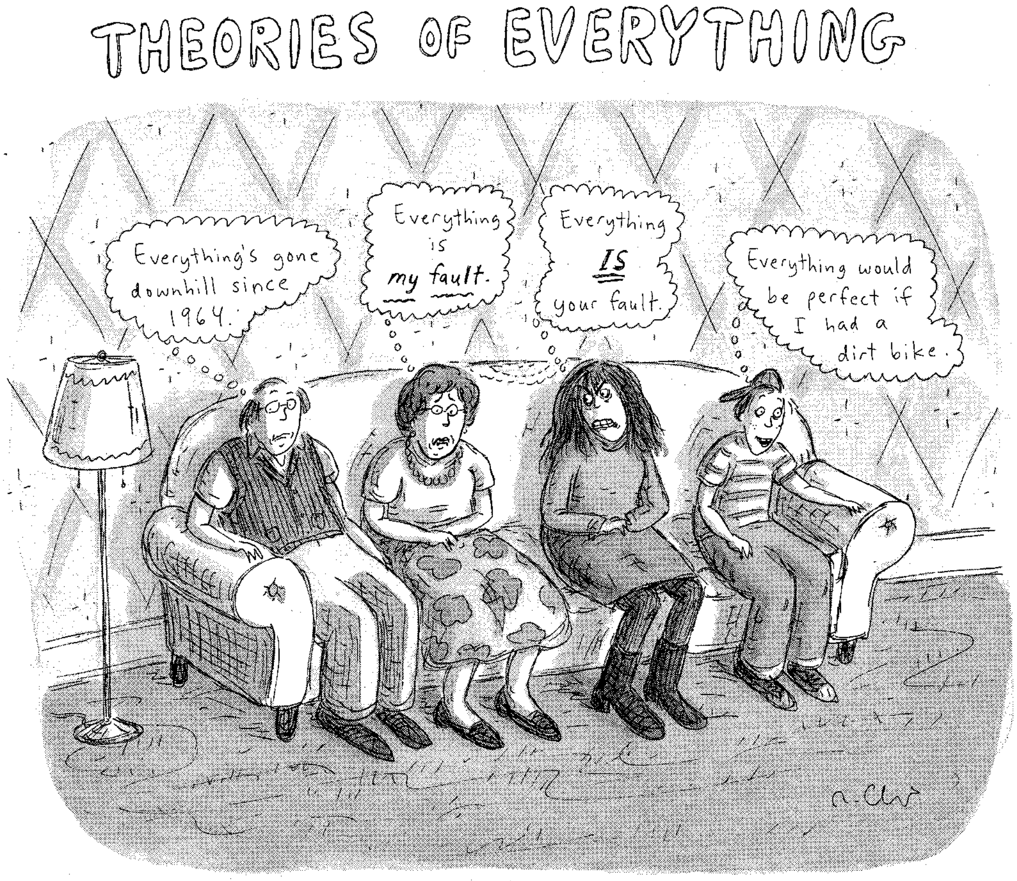
BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH



DURING the three years, eight months, and twenty-one days of mass death when Pol Pot was the supreme authority of Cambodia, almost everybody in the country lost track of time. The goals of the Khmer Rouge revolution were to make a tabula rasa of Cambodia's feudal society, to create a "new people," by emptying the cities and obliterating all vestiges of foreign culture, and, through a relentless program of purges and forced labor, to transform the country into an autonomous Communist idyll "with the speed of a Super Great Leap Forward." To own a watch or a clock during this period was to engage in the sort of recidivist individualism that every Cambodian soon learned could be corrected only by execution. And had calendars been permitted they would have con-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GILLES PERESS

The unexpurgated past: Former Khmer Rouge guerrillas at their "reintegration" into the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.


THEORIES OF EVERYTHING
Everything's gone downhill since 1964.
Everything is my fault.
Everything IS your fault.
Everything would be perfect if I had a dirt bike.

sisted of blank pages, for, after Pol Pot's forces overran the capital, Phnom Penh, on April 17, 1975, he announced that history was starting anew at Year Zero.

Day continued to give way to night, and night to day, and the monsoon continued to drench the infernally hot land during the period that used to be called May to November. But other than that, while more than a million and a half Cambodians were murdered or starved or worked to death, the rest lived—or, rather, tried to evade death—in a state of temporal oblivion that they speak of today as "Pol Pot time."

To be sure, some moments stood out as chronological markers. "After they kill my mother" is how a man named Sok Sin, who was my driver recently in Phnom Penh, described a chapter of his existence during the Zero Years.

"When was that?" I asked.

"Seventy-eight," he said.

"How do you know?"

"We just guess, never know," Sok Sin said. He spoke of his memories almost entirely in the present tense. This may have been due in part to the fact that he had taught himself English, but I found that in discussing other subjects he used the past tense correctly. In Pol Pot time, he said, "we never know the day. We never have Tuesday. Never have Wednesday. We have a kind of saying: Every day we call Monday." Monday, he explained, is always a workday. "We have Monday only—Monday, Monday."

Sok Sin told me that eleven of his brothers and sisters were killed by the Khmer Rouge. I asked him if he'd ever imagined, back then, that the grinding procession of Mondays would end, that there would be another time—an after.

"Nobody hope," he said. "Hundred per cent nobody hope that everything will change."

TWENTY years after losing all hope of a future, Sok Sin is the father of six children. He owns his own home, drives a Jeep Pajero, and earns his living—in dollars, the country's prevailing currency—as a private businessman. What's more, Pol Pot died on April 15th, and on July 26th Cambodians were allowed to vote, for the second time in five years, in a multiparty national election. So one might suppose that the Khmer Rouge is now nothing more than a hellish memory, shadowing the country's political progress from universal suffering to universal suffrage. But that's not how it is.

When I first visited Cambodia, three years ago, as much as twenty per cent of the country was still under the control of Khmer Rouge guerrillas loyal to Pol Pot. Since his death, the number of desperadoes still in open rebellion has dwindled to a few hundred. Yet nobody from the Khmer Rouge has been brought to justice for the atrocities of Pol Pot time; nor is there any significant stigma attached to having been a member of the Khmer Rouge. The overwhelming majority of those who led or served the regime are again living in the mainstream of Cambodian society, many of them as political or military officials of the Royal Cambodian Government. In fact, it is nearly impossible to find anyone with real power in Cambodia—including King Norodom Sihanouk—who has not been closely associated with Pol Pot. And although the Khmer Rouge was hardly discussed during this summer's election campaign, the inheritance of the Zero Years haunted the race as the negative standard against which Cambodian politics continue to be defined, both at home and abroad.

Pol Pot once said that when it comes to judging matters of right and wrong "the answer is strength. Strength! If you possess strength, then you are right, and if you lack strength, then you are wrong." Nobler sentiments can be found in the annals of Cambodian political discourse, but none that better describes the feudal reality of Cambodian statecraft, where the getting and holding of power is largely an affair of brute force, betrayal, and revenge, in which apparent allies sabotage one another while apparent enemies embrace, and political careers are reversed as often as a reflection in a hall of mirrors.

In this atmosphere, last month's election took shape as a referendum on the tenure of Hun Sen, a one-eyed, chain-smoking political bully who, under varying governmental rubrics, has served as

Prime Minister since 1985. Hun Sen has never been popular, but from the moment he called this election he predicted that he would remain in office, and even his fiercest opponents agreed that, by virtue of his nearly absolute control of the country's military, political, and electoral apparatuses, he would. Sure enough, last week, before all the vote had even been tallied, Hun Sen declared victory, and, when his challengers cried foul, he threatened to rewrite the constitution to validate his claim. After thirty years of incessant civil war and revolution, Cambodia once again braced for the sort of political turmoil that is Hun Sen's element. As a European human-rights professional in Phnom Penh told me, "Hun Sen is the master of Khmer politics. He has outmaneuvered every other player."

Hun Sen, who is forty-seven, learned the game in Pol Pot's school. The son of peasants, he joined the Khmer Rouge as a teen-ager, in the late sixties, and, during the Zero Years, served as a battalion commander, until he ran away to Vietnam to escape purges and came back as a "liberator" with the Vietnamese invasion-and-occupation force that drove Pol Pot from power in 1979. His record in the killing fields has never been precisely established, but a politician who worked closely with him in the eighties told me that during Pol Pot time Hun Sen was "in charge of discipline and revolutionary morale," and he added, "The officers based their discipline on having people eliminated."

After turning on his original masters, Hun Sen recast himself as the scourge of the remaining hard-line Khmer Rouge, and, acting on the premise that whoever opposed him must be a renegade Pol Potist, he has consolidated his power around the grim boast that, whatever can be said about him, Pol Pot was worse. This is what the country's most militant opposition leader, Sam Rainsy, calls "the curse of Cambodia"—that "everyone and everything is always compared to Pol Pot." After all, Rainsy told me, "it's very easy to be better than the Khmer Rouge in any field."

It is often said that a failure to reckon honestly with historical trauma, and to hold those responsible for it to account, leads to a kind of oblivion, in which memory becomes so distorted that it is lost. That's not Cambodia's problem. There, the unexpurgated past's relentless grip on the present has made memory as inescapable as it is bitter.

A hundred years before Pol Pot time, Cambodia was a country without a clear sense of its own origins, a sleepy, French-colonized Buddhist feudality, which appeared destined to vanish beneath its ever-encroaching neighbors, Thailand and Vietnam. Then French archeologists began excavating the jungle-wrapped, thousand-year-old ruins of a great imperial Khmer civilization called Angkor, and filled in the national memory blanks with the story of a time when Angkorian god-kings dominated—and exacted tribute from—much of Southeast Asia. The story ended in defeat: having erupted in ferment in the ninth century, Angkorian civilization was wiped out five hundred years later by Thai invaders. Nevertheless, French scholars, connecting the dots through the intervening dark ages, managed to trace a direct line of descent from the titans of Angkor to the decadent monarchy that occupied the Cambodian throne.

Enchanted by this discovery, colonial authorities built the royal family an ornate new palace, designed by French architects, at the center of Phnom Penh. For the cowed Cambodian masses, the monarchy, in its gilded cage, inspired greater awe than ever as the symbol of a lost kingdom restored in fairy-tale resplendence. To have ties to the palace was considered the greatest good fortune; so it happened, in the sort of peculiar cross-wiring of political destiny that characterizes Cambodian history, that at the age of six Saloth Sar, a rice farmer's son who later changed his name to Pol Pot, was sent to Phnom Penh to be raised by a cousin who was a dancer in the royal ballet and a royal concubine. From this position of privilege, he won a scholarship to study in Paris, where he became a Communist.

Pol Pot's first known political writing, published in 1952, when he was in his mid-twenties, was essentially a call for regicide: in it he described monarchy as "a malodorous running sore that just people must eliminate," and identified the enemy by name as King Norodom Sihanouk, who had been crowned by the Vichy French colonial authority in 1941. After presiding over Cambodia's independence, in 1954, Sihanouk, a self-styled "authoritarian," responded to the threat of revolution by hunting Communists so relentlessly that he is often said to have created the Khmer Rouge by driving them into underground resistance. He also gave them their name, coining the tag Red Cambodians as a smear.

In 1970, after the war in Vietnam had spilled over into Cambodia, Sihanouk was ousted by his Prime Minister. Then, in vainglorious fury, Sihanouk placed himself at the disposal of Pol Pot's guerrillas, and, apparently imagining that the Khmer Rouge might restore him to his throne, assumed the titular leadership of the revolution. His name became the Khmer Rouge's greatest recruitment tool, and the most extreme Communist movement in history swept to power on royal coattails. So Sihanouk, the symbolic embodiment of the nation, served the plotters of Cambodia's dismemberment, and this act of wild folly can be seen as the original sin in the ongoing spectacle of Cambodia's self-destruction—a drama in which there are no steadfast or coherent political principles but only the treacherous maneuverings of users and used.

Strikingly, when the alliance between Sihanouk and Pol Pot was at its height, the two men posed together for propaganda photographs among the monuments of Angkor, which French scholars had by then made known to the world as one of the greatest cultural achievements of antiquity. Cambodia was not the only postcolonial society that formed its modern self-image in response to the way it was perceived by its colonizers. But while colonialism tends to justify itself by projecting a belittling view of the colonized people, Cambodians had the rare experience of being taught by their colonizers to "remember" their nation as greater than they had ever known it to be. To be told that you are mighty while being confronted by the fact that you are not is to be told that there is something wrong with you. When such a humiliating rupture between image and substance is left unrepaired, it can become eviscerating. It leaves you dangling from the gallows of

Sam Rainsy, campaigning in Ratanakiri in June. The opposition candidate called himself Hun Sen's "democratic alibi," and said, "For

the moment, I'm more useful alive than dead."

Salman Rushdie's formulation: "Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence."

POL POT'S funeral, this spring, was fittingly ignominious. On April 18th, three days dead and boxed in a rough plank coffin, he was heaped onto a pyre composed of used tires, scrap wood, and unwanted furniture—his own mattress and chair—which was then doused in gasoline and reduced to ashes. "BURNED LIKE OLD RUBBISH," announced the Phnom Penh *Post*. Still, it seemed unfair that history's script should have allowed Cambodia's icon of inhumanity such a humdrum end: succumbing, at the age of seventy-three, to an apparent heart attack, six months after telling the American journalist Nate Thayer, "My conscience is clean."

Last July, after having his longtime comrade, Son Sen, and eleven members of Son Sen's family murdered and repeatedly run over by a truck, Pol Pot had been toppled in a Khmer Rouge power struggle, and sentenced by a "people's tribunal" to life imprisonment. But the punishment amounted to little more than a forced retirement. Confined to his hut with his wife and teen-age daughter, Pol Pot spent his remaining months weakened by disease and feeling misunderstood. "Everything I have done and contributed is first for the nation and people and race of Cambodia," he told Thayer last October, adding, "Our movement made mistakes like every other movement in the world. We were young." He also claimed that Mahatma Gandhi was one of his early influences. Cambodians were not amused. "When he died," an American lawyer in Phnom Penh told me, "the first popular reaction here was anger—the bastard escaped."

That was the basic sentiment in Washington as well. It had been reported in the days before Pol Pot's death that the United States was eagerly pursuing plans to bring him to justice, and that his Khmer Rouge keepers were inclined to hand him over. Still, it was strange to hear Jimmy Carter, the day after the death, saying of the Khmer Rouge regime, "There is a great disappointment that this kind of horrendous atrocity can go on—recognized by the world but with the perpetrator immune to any kind of punishment." After all, Carter was President when Pol Pot was driven from power by the Vietnamese, and it was in full knowledge of those horrors that his Administration tacitly supported the rearmament of the Khmer Rouge and worked successfully to insure that it retained Cambodia's seat at the United Nations, as the country's legitimate "government in exile." This policy continued during the Reagan and Bush years, for what mattered in Washington was that Vietnam was a Soviet ally and client, while the Khmer Rouge was a protégé of our great new friend China.

Among the alliances that formed around the dirty proxy wars of yesteryear, none was more perverse, or more enduringly injurious to the host country, than the West's rescue of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge after 1979. But such was the geopolitical calculus by which the Cold War was won.

ONE morning this summer, I went to Tuol Sleng, a former high school in Phnom Penh that had served during Pol Pot time as the Khmer Rouge's main torture center. As many as twenty thousand men, women, and children were processed there—brutalized until they "confessed" to being "enemies of the Party" and photographed with numbers hung round their necks—before being murdered. The victims' photographs are now displayed on the walls of the old interrogation chambers like giant sheets of postage stamps. Elsewhere, the old schoolroom dungeons are plastered with photographs of mangled corpses which were recovered from the murderers' files.

Outside, the palm-lined schoolyard was dotted with flowering frangipani trees. At its center stood a small, one-room building with barred windows. A group of people had gathered outside, holding numbers and waiting to be photographed by a man with a Polaroid. They were being processed, it turned out, for voter registration. The torture center was being used as a polling station.

During the Zero Years, being sent to Tuol Sleng was the end: for those accused of treason, death was the only alternative to confession, and death was also the punishment for those who confessed. A sign now hangs outside a row of cells where prisoners were often mutilated to death while shackled to a metal bed. The sign lists ten "security regulations" that the house torturers addressed to those they interrogated. No. 3 says, "Don't be a fool for you are a chap who dare to thwart the revolution." No. 6 says, "While getting lashes or electrification you must not cry at all." No. 10 is redundant: it says, "If you disobey any point of my regulations you shall get either ten lashes or five shocks of electric discharge."

Tuol Sleng was turned into a museum in the early eighties, during the Vietnamese occupation. It was modelled on the Nazi concentration-camp museums in Eastern Europe, and it is called a "genocide" museum. But the regime of death that the Khmer Rouge visited on Cambodia does not properly fit the legal definition of genocide: "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Although some minority groups were singled out for special persecution in Pol Pot time, the crime as a whole was the systematic mass murder of Cambodian people by the Cambodian state. As in Stalinist Russia and Maoist China, the slaughter was committed in the name of Communism, and to say that it was not genocide does not diminish the offense. If anything, killing one's own is even more incomprehensible than the us-versus-them killing of "others." When "us" kills "us," it's a form of national suicide.

Nearly everybody who was killed at Tuol Sleng was a Khmer Rouge operative or sympathizer. A year after coming to power, the Khmer Rouge had already effectively wiped out urban and educated classes, abolished money, and produced a population composed exclusively of Party cadres and forced laborers, without schools, medical care, Buddhist pagodas, or even family kitchens. And yet Pol Pot remained dissatisfied. Revolution, he believed, had to remain in continuous struggle with counter-revolution, and as he searched for counter-revolutionaries his paranoia was boundless. The rough numbers from Tuol Sleng sketch the curve: two hundred "enemies" processed in 1975; two thousand two hundred and fifty in 1976; more than six thousand in 1977; and at least ten thousand in 1978. If the Khmer Rouge can be said to have had a coherent principle, it was, Purge or be purged.

"You know, at the time, I have a few dogs," my driver, Sok Sin, told me. "But they kill all the dogs, because they always spy, they always under your bed." He was describing life in a labor camp after he had been evacuated from Phnom Penh, along with the rest of its nearly two million inhabitants, right after the Khmer Rouge takeover. I didn't understand why the Khmer Rouge had killed dogs. By way of an explanation, Sok Sin told me about the time one of his brothers came to visit him in the labor camp. (The visit was possible because this brother worked for the Khmer Rouge.) Sok Sin and his brother slept in the same room, on beds made of bamboo slats. One of the slats in Sok Sin's bed was broken, and he reached out in the darkness to adjust it. "One of my hands touched a Khmer Rouge—under my bed," he said. "They want to spy when my brother comes, what he tells us and what we tell him."

I still didn't understand. "Why did they kill all the dogs?"

"Because," he said impatiently, "easy to come to your bed, come to your house, underneath your bed."

I understood. Dogs like to sleep under beds, and the Khmer Rouge liked to sneak under beds for nighttime spying. The Khmer Rouge killed the dogs so they could take the dogs' place.

On the wall behind the voter-registration table at the Tuol Sleng polling station, a mural depicted a Khmer Rouge killing field. Somebody had covered the mural with a blue plastic sheet, but the left edge remained exposed, showing the figure of a man, in profile, raising a club over his head. A woman named Uy Srem, who was standing by the door, holding a card marked "#6," told me that she was fifty-four years old and had lived next door to the torture museum since 1982 but had never come in before. "I didn't want to be reminded of Pol Pot time," she said.

Perhaps she also meant that she didn't need to be reminded, because, after a few minutes of silence, she said, "None of my relatives were killed here. They were killed somewhere else."

Then an election official called out, "Number Six," and Uy Srem said, "It's my turn now. Can I go?"

There is a play called "The Terrible but Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia," written by the French postmodernist literary theorist Hélène Cixous. It's a historical drama, and one of its devices is the classical use of a chorus. At the point in the play when Sihanouk first allies himself with the

"Like everyone else these days, we've made most of our friends through our kids."

Khmer Rouge, the chorus remarks, "When all is perfidy, how hard it is for a narrative to be faithful." I read Cixous's play in Cambodia, as this year's election campaign got under way, and that line became lodged in my mind. Nobody could be sure how the polling would turn out, and in principle such uncertainty implies choice, possibility—hope. But in Cambodia the final tally was only one of many considerations. For instance, a favorite subject for speculation was whether a candidate who made a strong showing at the polls would end up in the government, in the morgue, or in exile.

The point of reference for this year's election was the last one—in 1993—which had been the first time in recorded history that Cambodians had a reasonably free and fair vote, with secret ballots. That exercise was made possible only by virtue of an occupation force of twenty-two thousand United Nations military and civilian personnel deployed, in accordance with a multiparty peace agreement, over a period of eighteen months. The operation cost more than two billion dollars, but even that wasn't enough to buy electoral democracy for Cambodia.

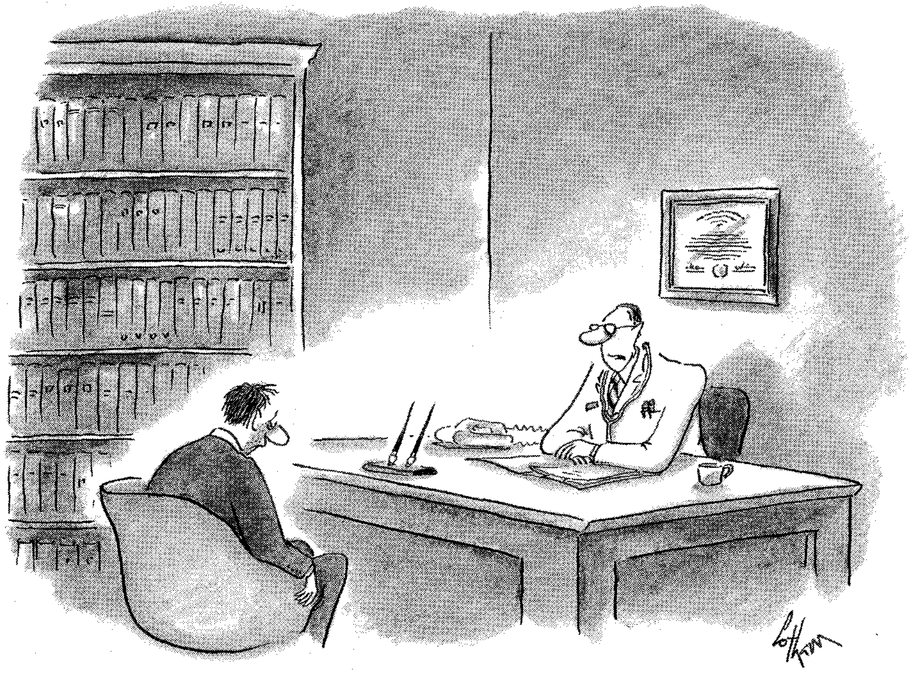
Originally, the Khmer Rouge was supposed to participate in the 1993 vote. When it dropped out, denouncing the election as a "stinking farce," the only significant challenge to Hun Sen came from FUNCINPEC—the United National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Coöperative Cambodia—which is a royalist party, led by one of Sihanouk's sons, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Despite a pervasive air of menace—Hun Sen's followers beat, and not infrequently murdered, oppositionists—the presence of the United Nations emboldened Cambodians. An astonishing ninety per cent of the electorate went to the polls, and by a substantial plurality it voted for change by voting for FUNCINPEC. When Hun Sen realized that his efforts to rig the election had failed, he threatened to secede and go to war if the vote was not "corrected."

The crisis was resolved by the intervention of Sihanouk, who had been living in lavish exile as a government guest in Beijing and in Pyongyang, North Korea. The scheme he concocted was based on the lie that the election had produced "no winners and no losers," and resulted in a government in which Hun Sen and Ranariddh stood as co-premiers, theoretically equal in power, but with Ranariddh enjoying the fancier title of First Prime Minister, while Hun Sen, as Second Prime Minister, retained control of just about every aspect of the state that mattered. To complete the covenant, Sihanouk arranged for Cambodia to be a constitutional monarchy, and restored himself as its king, albeit one who "reigns but does not rule."

Once all parties had agreed to this deal, the United Nations concluded that democracy had prevailed over bloodshed in Cambodia and promptly withdrew its forces, leaving behind a charade of the values it had come to promote. When the new regime wasn't simply paralyzed by intrigue, it was crippled by corruption, and, with the ongoing war against the Khmer Rouge as a pretext to justify any excess in the name of national security, the regime's critics were systematically subjected to harassment, jail, or assassination. The two Prime Ministers did not share power so much as its spoils, creating a nationwide ecological disaster by divvying up Cambodia's dwindling timber supply—its only significant exportable natural resource—while, with official complicity, the country became a major transshipment hub for narcotics.

At first, Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen worked together, making mutual use of the mafia state and calling each other "brother." Then they began to call each other "traitor" and to build up their respective factions in the nominally unified Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. Hun Sen's camp was stronger, and during the first half of last year Ranariddh and his generals sought to recruit thousands of Khmer Rouge fighters to their side. But the Khmer Rouge, torn by internal conflicts, kept stalling. On July 4, 1997, Ranariddh took the advice of his generals and left the country. The next day, Hun Sen's artillery began blasting Phnom Penh, and, as one U.N. staffer who was stationed there summed it up, "In forty-eight hours, there wasn't a FUNCINPEC gun left in the city." Rumors, charges, and countercharges flew, but the one thing that seemed beyond dispute was that, with Hun Sen's bloody dismantling of the opposition, the new election season had begun.

THE change in atmosphere between last July and this July could not have been greater. Last year, the burning streets of Phnom Penh were deserted except for Hun Sen's troops and bewildered citizens carting their wounded to hospitals in wheelbarrows. This year, the same streets were festooned with the cam-



"Unfortunately, there's no cure—there's not even a race for a cure."

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paign banners of opposition parties. Last year, Hun Sen shouted angrily at reporters, "Whether you recognize this government or not, you cannot deny the reality of this government"; this year, with his tone mellowed almost to a purr, he was saying that if he lost the election he would happily step down and devote his time to improving his golf game. And yet, during the weeks I spent in Cambodia as the electoral exercise ratcheted into full gear, I could not find a single Cambodian who believed that Hun Sen could win a truly honest election, nor could I find one who believed that he would accept the results if he lost.

In mid-July, when the voting was imminent, panic shopping began in Phnom Penh, with people stockpiling rice, oil, sugar, salt—the basic things you'd want in a time of siege. There were rumors of extensive troop movements; businesses began bolting their shutters, and thousands of residents, fearing turmoil, cleared out of the capital, thus forgoing the chance to vote. On July 17th, Hun Sen, who had hardly bothered to campaign, checked into a hospital for an appendectomy, and spent much of the preëlection period in Kremlin-style convalescence, blaming those who expressed fears for creating a violence-prone atmosphere. "What constitutes intimidation? I do not understand intimidation," he told reporters who found him shuffling around the hospital courtyard in pajamas and slippers, before he returned to the Tiger's Lair, an artillery-ringed fortress in suburban Phnom Penh that he calls home. "I could not even advise my daughter to vote," he said. "I'm not sure she will vote for me."

I had heard similar spin from a French diplomat I met in Phnom Penh, who was very enthusiastic about Hun Sen as a force of stability. "Let's be clear and realistic," he said. "We get Hun Sen elected, not free and fair like in our countries, but O.K., good enough. Then we can have legitimacy, diplomacy, investment, order, and these poor people can get on with their lives without political trouble."

Such less-than-democratic views are widely shared by foreign diplomats in Phnom Penh, a number of whom supported last month's vote as a way to launder Cambodia's international image. After last year's coup, Hun Sen's regime was treated as a pariah by the international community—shut out of the United Nations General Assembly and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and denied much of the foreign aid on which Cambodia's feeble economy depends. But as soon as Hun Sen called for a new election his international stock began to rise. Never mind that United Nations human-rights investigators had implicated Hun Sen's forces in at least a hundred executions and disappearances since the coup and insisted that conditions for a free and fair election did not exist; and never mind that Hun Sen's party had stacked the National Election Commission. A U.N.-organized team of international observers did not even wait for the ballots to be counted, much less for reports of voter intimidation and electoral irregularities to be investigated, before declaring, on the day after the vote, that the election had been "free and fair" enough "to reflect in a credible way the will of the Cambodian people," and urging "all parties" to "accept and honor the results of the election without any attempt to undermine the original outcome." Hun Sen, triumphant, threatened that if opposition leaders refused to become powerless partners in a coalition government—an idea, he said, that "delighted" King Sihanouk—he would, in the name of democracy, simply go on ruling as before.

"The crude equation being played here on all sides is that elections equal democracy," one disgusted Western diplomat told me, adding, "I think it's a clear whitewash. I think the Secretary-General could find himself in a very embarrassing position." Then he said, "But how long is anyone going to worry about it?"

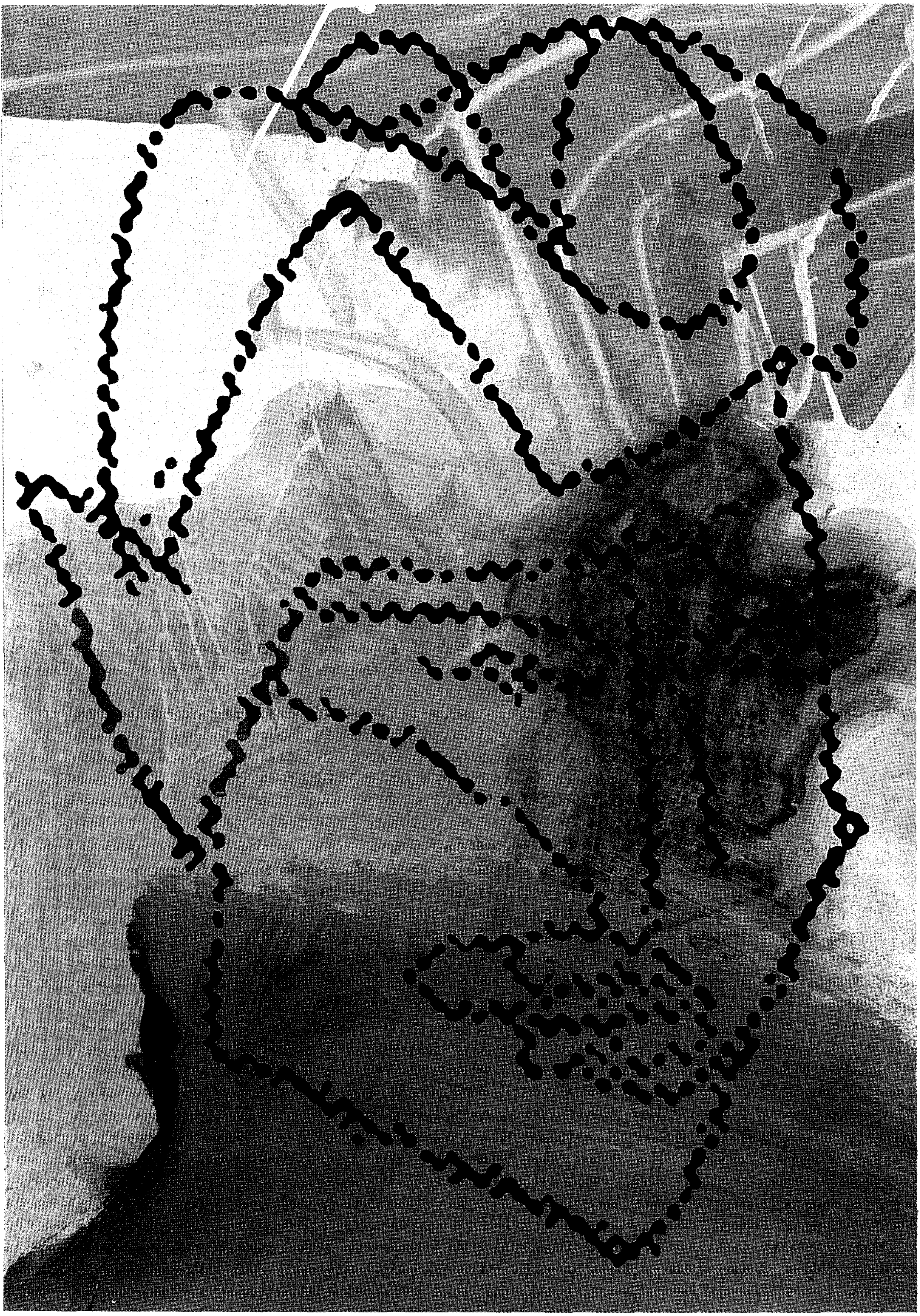
Only the United States broke ranks with the U.N., the European Union, and Japan, refusing to help pay for the elections in advance and insisting on making its own assessment of the exercise. The French diplomat I met in Phnom Penh considered Washington's position disingenuous. "The Americans want Hun Sen's stability just as much as we do, but they're a little hung up on human rights," he said. This was a novel criticism of America's Cambodia policy. But, as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright observed last week, "the real test of Cambodia's democracy will come after the ballots are counted." Even as the international-observer team in Phnom Penh issued its favorable review, Albright remarked, "The only people who, at this stage, deserve congratulations are the people of Cambodia who turned out to vote in heavy numbers." Instead of offering congratulations, however, Hun Sen's forces last week began a program of violent retaliations against opposition supporters, forcing dozens of provincial activists to flee their homes in fear for their lives.

On July 9th, the Reuters wire carried a story, datelined Mok Kampul, Cambodia, about a FUNCINPEC activist, named Thong Sophal, "who was allegedly tortured to death because of his political affiliation." The article included these two sentences: "His eyes had been gouged out, his head smashed in, the skin had been stripped from his lower legs and all his fingers and one ear had been cut off, human-rights workers said. Police said they suspected Thong Sophal had killed himself."

Such stories are an almost daily staple of the news in Cambodia: people killed by grenades hurled into homes, by automatic-weapons fire in a rice paddy, by vigilante mobs. The police generally describe the motive for these killings as robbery or "malice," but a local human-rights worker told me that

HEAD LINE

In the early sixties, while American Pop art was replacing the soul-searching gestures of Abstract Expressionism with images of Brillo boxes and Donald Duck, a darker, more enigmatic strain of the movement emerged in Germany. Sigmar Polke, a leading pioneer of Euro-Pop, began experimenting with the Benday dots of commercial printing just a few months after Roy Lichtenstein hit on the idea in his comic-strip paintings. A suite of forty gouaches from 1996 entitled "Music of Unclarified Origin" is on view at the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, in Long Island City, through August 23rd. At its best, Polke's work manages to be simultaneously puzzling and pretty; in this detail, washes of pure color are overlaid with the crudely rendered image of a devilish male head, as disturbing as it is vacant. The painting's title is characteristically opaque: " 'There's always a pecking order,' says Dagmar Steffen and straightens the butter knife."



COURTESY OF THE INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN CULTURAL RELATIONS, STUTTGART

"Oh, God. Here comes the global-village idiot."

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in most such cases the victims tend to be "opposition partisans."

In the Reuters dispatch about Thong Sophal's mutilation, his widow said she had reason to believe that her husband was murdered by members of Hun Sen's party. If she is right, two questions arise: What was the political cause for which Thong Sophal lost his life? And, if Hun Sen was staging an election to make himself palatable to the international community, was Thong Sophal's death a kind of suicide, after all?

There were thirty-nine parties listed on the ballot in July, but there were only two serious opposition contenders: Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who had been allowed to return to Cambodia in March in an arrangement by which he was first convicted of treason in absentia and then granted a royal pardon by his father; and Sam Rainsy, a former investment banker, who had been the Finance Minister and a FUNCINPEC parliamentarian before denouncing Ranariddh and Hun Sen for corruption and being expelled from the government in 1995.

Ranariddh's old residence in Phnom Penh was badly damaged in last July's fighting and is now boarded up. I found the fifty-four-year-old Prince living in a newly rented mansion near the American Embassy, and he received me there in a glass-walled, well-refrigerated sitting room filled with French-style antiques. The Prince is a small, moon-faced man, who is frequently described as an intellectual dullard; as he himself says, he owes his standing in public life to his royal blood. The only time he really seemed to brighten during our meeting was when his attention alighted on his dog, a cocker spaniel named Tiffin, which he chided, for no apparent reason, as a "naughty, naughty girl." When I asked him what FUNCINPEC's essential ideas and promises were, he answered me with one word: "Royalism."

"Which means what?" I asked.

"Simply that we are faithful to our ideals," Ranariddh said, adding, "Because we are the creation, if not the creature, of His Majesty the King, as a god-king, we have to be faithful to the throne."

But why should Cambodians—rice farmers, factory workers, merchants, university students—be excited by royalism, much less lay down their lives for it? "Monarchy means for them two thousand five hundred years of history, of splendors," the Prince said. At the same time, he described his own years as First Prime Minister as less than splendid: "I did not take the people into consideration very much—the grass-roots members of FUNCINPEC, who faced threats of intimidation, even assassination, during the electoral campaign in 1993."

Sam Rainsy agreed that Ranariddh had betrayed his supporters, and in trying to win them over to his side Rainsy has presented himself as Hun Sen's greatest antagonist. He is a trim, bespectacled man whose standard uniform of oxford shirts and dark suit pants gives him the look of a forty-eight-year-old schoolboy, and his seemingly mild, bookish demeanor only enhances his standing as a dissident who has faced down death threats and assassination attempts. In March of 1997, four grenades were lobbed into one of Rainsy's rallies in Phnom Penh, leaving shredded bodies strewn over the grass—at least fifteen dead, more than a hundred wounded. The attack is generally understood in Cambodia to have been sponsored by Hun Sen, and although he has denied responsibility for it, his government has made no apparent effort to identify the perpetrators. "It was obviously an attempt to eliminate the leadership of a major opposition party—me," Rainsy explained. No further proof was needed, he said, that Hun Sen "is a killer who would not hesitate to kill anybody who gets in the way of his absolute power."

Yet Rainsy did not think it strange that, once Hun Sen had decided to seek international legitimacy by allowing a vote, Cambodians would again attend his rallies in large numbers. "Since Hun Sen is sure to win the election, he doesn't need to kill me," Rainsy told me. "On the contrary, I'm very useful. He wants me as his democratic alibi. So for the moment I'm more useful alive than dead. But he will try to weaken me so I'm just a symbol. He will try to cut my arms, my legs, which means to kill my supporters at the grass-roots level."

What Rainsy really wanted, as I saw when I accompanied him to Cambodia's isolated northwestern province of Ratanakiri, was for the international community to back him up. In Ratanakiri, Rainsy undertook to lead a march of several hundred workers from a rubber plantation owned by cronies of Hun Sen to protest the appalling wages they received for their gruelling labor.

Since last July's coup, prices for consumer goods had doubled, while the rubber workers' wages had remained stable: around fifty cents a day.

As Rainsy spoke to the rubber workers, he pointed to me and said that the international media were on hand to bear witness to their struggle. When I asked him to leave me out of it—after all, the workers would have to face the consequences of their protest alone—Rainsy said he understood. But he wanted me to understand his position as well. "There is a vast powder of social injustice," he told me. "I'm just the spark, and it can explode like dynamite." He seemed to relish the idea that such an explosion would be a reproach to the international community. Yet he reminded me, as we drove away from the plantation, that the international community that now claims to support democracy in Cambodia is led by the same powers that had, when it suited them, supported Pol Pot.

In human-rights terminology, contemporary Cambodia is "a culture of impunity." Corruption is so blatant that, one morning in Phnom Penh, I came across a protest outside the Ministry of Culture, in which staffers denounced the minister as a crook because he had sold the ministry building without cutting them in on the deal. Even the officials who profit from this system have no faith in it; they reinvest their capital abroad, maintain foreign safe houses, and send their children overseas for schooling. (Hun Sen's son, Hun Manot, is a cadet at West Point.) There is so much public viciousness in Cambodia that one can tolerate it only by thinking, as Hun Sen is quick to remind one, that there could be even more.

One day in early June, I watched a man being murdered in the middle of the afternoon on Monivong Boulevard, the main thoroughfare of Phnom Penh. Sok Sin was driving, and as we nosed out into Monivong a white van came toward us, moving jerkily and trailing smoke. The van was being pursued and fired upon by a phalanx of eight or nine motorcycle policemen, brandishing a variety of weapons, from pistols to assault rifles.

We followed, and two minutes later the van stopped. The policemen packed themselves in around the driver's door and a crowd massed behind them: out of nowhere, twenty people materialized, then fifty, then a hundred. Sitting in Sok Sin's Jeep, at a distance of about a hundred feet, we watched the police snatch the driver out of his van. The movement was so abrupt that for an instant the man appeared to be flying over their heads, and then, just as rapidly, he straightened more or less upright and fell among them. He didn't hit the ground. He couldn't. Blows kept him aloft. He was getting clobbered—pitched around a narrow ring of cops by uppercuts and downward smashes, fists and kicks and knees and pistol whips and baton jabs.

After about four seconds of this, Sok Sin said, "He in coma now." And after three seconds more the man dropped—like a suit on a hanger knocked from its peg—and as he fell Sok Sin said, "He dead now."

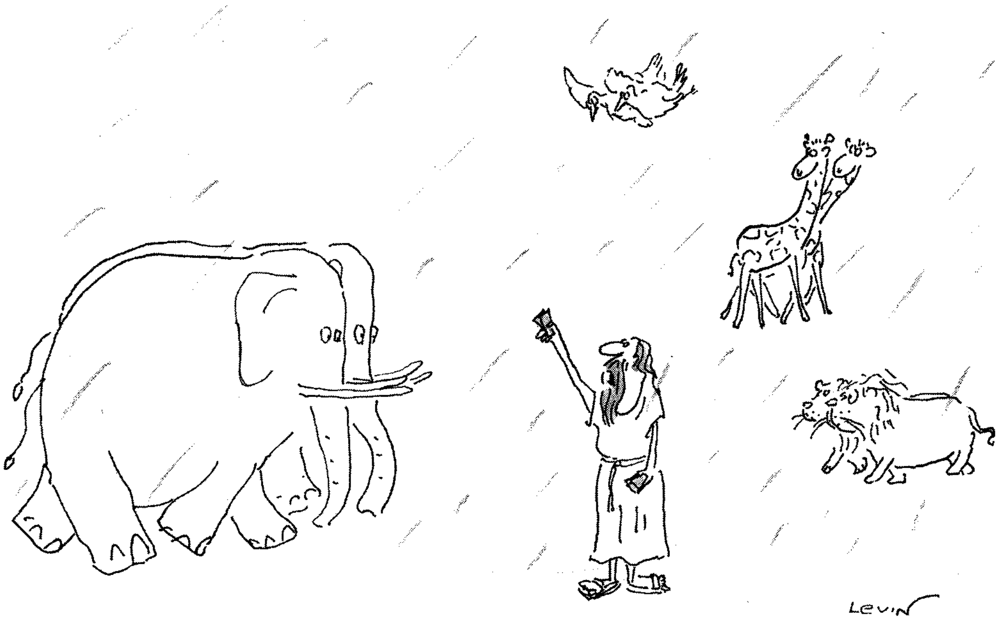
That was it.

The police stood around, flushed with adrenaline but oddly at ease, and one of them, who was emptying spent cartridges from his pistol, explained that the dead man had caused an accident and then fled from the scene. From what I could gather, the accident had not been especially serious, but I was told that the police in Phnom Penh tend to impound the car of anyone who causes an accident, as collateral against damages. Evidently, the van driver had panicked, hoping to protect his property, and by the time the police began shooting at him there was nothing he could do to protect his life.

Beside the dead man's body, a woman and several young boys crouched amid the boots of the police: his widow and children. Nobody paid any attention to them. The woman rocked, and wailed, "I told him to stop, he wouldn't stop. I said, 'Stop.' He didn't want to."

The man had put up no resistance. He should have been arrested, but apparently the police had felt like killing him instead. From an administrative point of view, it was probably less of a hassle, and among these men who had just murdered with their hands there was a strong current of excitement and release, while among the civilian onlookers there was no detectable sense of outrage. I could not identify any shared response to the scene beyond the flat certainty with which Sok Sin had said, "He in coma now"—tick, tick, tick—"He dead now." Sok Sin knew exactly what a body could take. They all seemed to know.

Sok Sin once told me about a man in his labor camp during Pol Pot time who had said at the end of the day, in the communal eating place, "Oh, I work very hard, the food is very bad." Right away, Khmer Rouge spies came and hauled the man away to their headquarters. Sok Sin explained that he could hear what happened because he lived next door. "And 'Ohhh'—like that,"



"Twofers! Twofers!"

he said, emitting a soft sinking groan.

"They killed him?" I asked.

"Yeah," he said. "Oh, so easy to be killed."

Sok Sin said he had stayed alive by playing the village idiot, working like an ox, and singing all the time: "Just work and singing only, and everything it look very mad, very fool, very mental. Yeah, like an act." He sang the same song, over and over, a Khmer Rouge song. "It just say about feudalism, capitalism, about the poor people own the property—we work for our own selves—like that." In the last year of Pol Pot time, the killing in Cambodia's eastern zone, where Sok Sin lived, was constant. "All my men," he said, "my colleagues from Phnom Penh, from one day to one day, disappear, disappear every day, every night, except me only, because I always watch the activity."

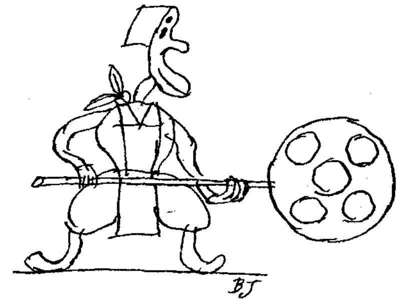
He would force himself to stay awake, away from his bed, until midnight, when the soldiers were too drunk to kill anymore. He would sit out in the darkness, silently fanning his arms like wings back and forth across his body, because to slap a mosquito was to give yourself away. Despite his vigilance, he was once selected to join a lineup of people to be killed. Standing there, Sok Sin spotted a rice-storage bin, built on short stilts to protect against flooding during the monsoon. He ducked under it in a flash and somebody else was killed in his stead. He laughed when he told me that.

Watching the man in the white van get killed, I had seen how little it takes to stop surviving, so I had become more attuned to what it takes to survive: the mixture of reflexes and accommodation and intelligence and pure dumb luck, and the strange balance between awareness and indifference it requires. This struck me as useful information, because Cambodia is a society of those who have not simply lived to their present age but have survived and kept on surviving. As Sok Sin put it, "I survive many times, many."

CAMBODIA'S paramount survivor is, of course, King Sihanouk, who has made a point of staying away from Phnom Penh since last July's coup, in order to show his disdain for Hun Sen. His Majesty divides his time between his country palace, near the ruins of Angkor Wat, and Beijing. (He receives a substantial annual income from the Chinese government.) Like Pol Pot, he seems to feel underappreciated and poorly understood. In order to set the record straight, he spends a good deal of his time compiling a fat "monthly bulletin," in which he publishes, by photocopy, an odd lot of personal memoirs, correspondence, newspaper clippings annotated in his own hand, and interviews with himself. Last October, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, the interview question was why he planned to have a low-key celebration, and thus deprive the people who love him so much of the opportunity to feast and carry on in his name. The core of his reply was:

> In an Asia and, in particular, in a Southeast Asia and an Oceania in an evident state of opening-up, we are the only country to be an oasis of war, of insecurity, of self-destruction (including an ultra-catastrophic deforestation), of poverty, of social injustice, of arch-corruption, of lawlessness, of national division, of totalitarianism, of drug trafficking, of AIDS and of all that most irremediably distances us from that Angkorian grandeur, whose saboteurs and destroyers still love so much to wear it as a "crown of laurels" on their heads.
>
> If I weren't a Buddhist, I would have to commit suicide, because the end of my life is filled with shame, humiliation and despair of a national scope.

Considering Cambodia's predilection for self-annihilation, it seems inevitable that the man who believes himself to be the divine embodiment of the nation should wish to take his own life. Then again, it's hard to believe that what holds him back is religious feeling, when even as he laments Cambodia's plight his bulletin includes hagiographic tributes to the North Korean tyrant Kim Jong Il, who is currently presiding over the starvation of millions of his subjects. As the Venerable Yos Hut Khemacaro, one of the senior monks in Cambodia's Buddhist hierarchy, told me, "Egoism is totally at odds with Buddhism, and egoism is shared by all our leaders in political life. They say they are Buddhist, but they are not properly Buddhist. They lack it all—tolerance, humility, nonviolence. So we see many dictators."

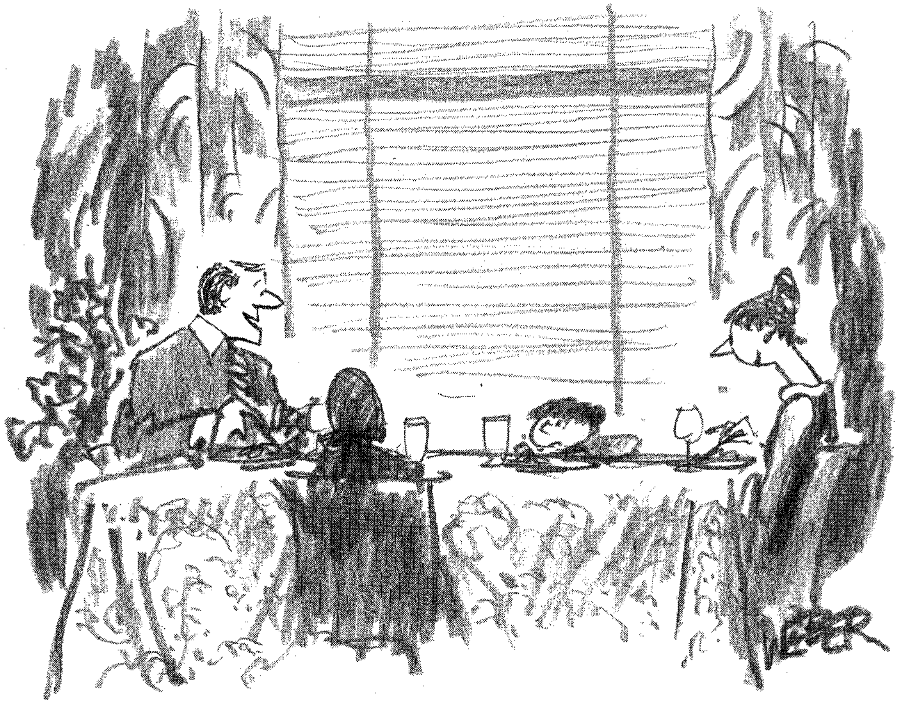


Several Western diplomats and human-rights professionals told me that Hun Sen, of late, has seemed to be styling himself more and more after Sihanouk—or, at least, after an image of what Sihanouk might have hoped to be like. They meant that Hun Sen, having largely defanged the opposition, has toned down the famously aggressive style of his earlier years. They also meant that, instead of fighting the renegade elements of the Khmer Rouge, he has exploited the rebel organization's internal fragmentation, to forge alliances with the very men whom he had dedicated his own post-killing-fields career to demonizing. What has distinguished Hun Sen's deal-making with the Khmer Rouge from Ranariddh's before last July's coup is that Hun Sen has operated from a position of strength. By turning Khmer Rouge members from rebels into loyalists, he has been able to claim that—for the first time in thirty years—Cambodia is free from a significant threat of internal armed conflict.

But the absorption of the Khmer Rouge into what passes for the Cambodian establishment is not exactly the total conquest of the "Hitlerites" that Hun Sen had promised. Large swaths of western Cambodia, for instance, are now run as a semi-autonomous fiefdom under the leadership of Ieng Sary—Pol Pot's former second-in-command and brother-in-law. Ieng Sary, one of the most wanted perpetrators of crimes against humanity, is a frequent visitor to Phnom Penh, where he spends much of his time in meetings with high government and military officers. In June, he was granted a private audience with King Sihanouk. Profits from logging and gem mining have made him and his old Khmer Rouge colleagues wealthy, and their zone is becoming a center for duty-free shopping and casino gambling.

After Pol Pot's death, President Clinton called for a continued effort to capture and bring to justice the surviving members of the Khmer Rouge leadership who were responsible for the atrocities of the Zero Years. Hun Sen has said that he will be prepared to coöperate with such an effort once this year's vote produces a new government. It is commonly supposed that he would happily trade a few prize suspects for international approval of substandard elections. But many refuse to believe that he has any interest in allowing a tribunal to open the past to legal inquiry. "The Khmer Rouge, former and neo, are in power and are not interested or willing to bring to justice their own comrades," Sam Rainsy told me in June. And, a U.N. staffer explained, "a lot of Cambodians think the Khmer Rouge factions inside the government will be activated at some point. Hun Sen is handing out client positions to them right and left."

That was what Youk Chhang, an investigator of the Khmer Rouge at the Documentation Center of Cambodia, in Phnom Penh, feared. "I think right now is more dangerous than before, because now the Khmer Rouge are in government uniform," Chhang told me. "They're everywhere in this city. They act like government authorities, but when they're in government uniform what motivates them? Is it the old loyalty or the new one? I'm not afraid of Khmer Rouge in the jungle, but I'm very afraid of Khmer Rouge in the city."



"Thank you, Adrian. Parenting is a learning process, and your criticisms help."

• •

IN early June, as a guest of Hun Sen's government, I flew from the city to the jungle—to the village of Anlong Veng, Pol Pot's old stronghold, near the Thai border, which until April was the last remaining base of unreconstructed Khmer Rouge fighters. Transport was a massive Russian helicopter—an aerial whale—designed to carry several tanks, and carrying on this occasion a delegation of some two hundred Cambodian military personnel and foreign diplomats. The occasion was a "reintegration" ceremony to induct the last major group of Khmer Rouge defectors into the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

For years, Anlong Veng had been a place of mystery, sinister and unreachable, the citadel of Cambodia's horrors and fears. When Hun Sen's forces took control of it, schoolchildren were still studying from textbooks that taught such guerrilla-warfare techniques as using poisoned bamboo stakes to make enemies "break into convulsions and die." A schoolroom blackboard explained that contact with outsiders was a crime punishable by death.

Anlong Veng turned out to be a rather ordinary rural village, impoverished and drab. In the center of town, a stage had been set up, and a band was playing what sounded like a Khmer interpretation of country-and-Western music. Arrayed in a dirt clearing in front of the platform were several dozen automatic assault rifles, a mortar, and some mortar shells, and behind this modest display of weaponry at least a thousand Khmer Rouge defectors stood in orderly rows.

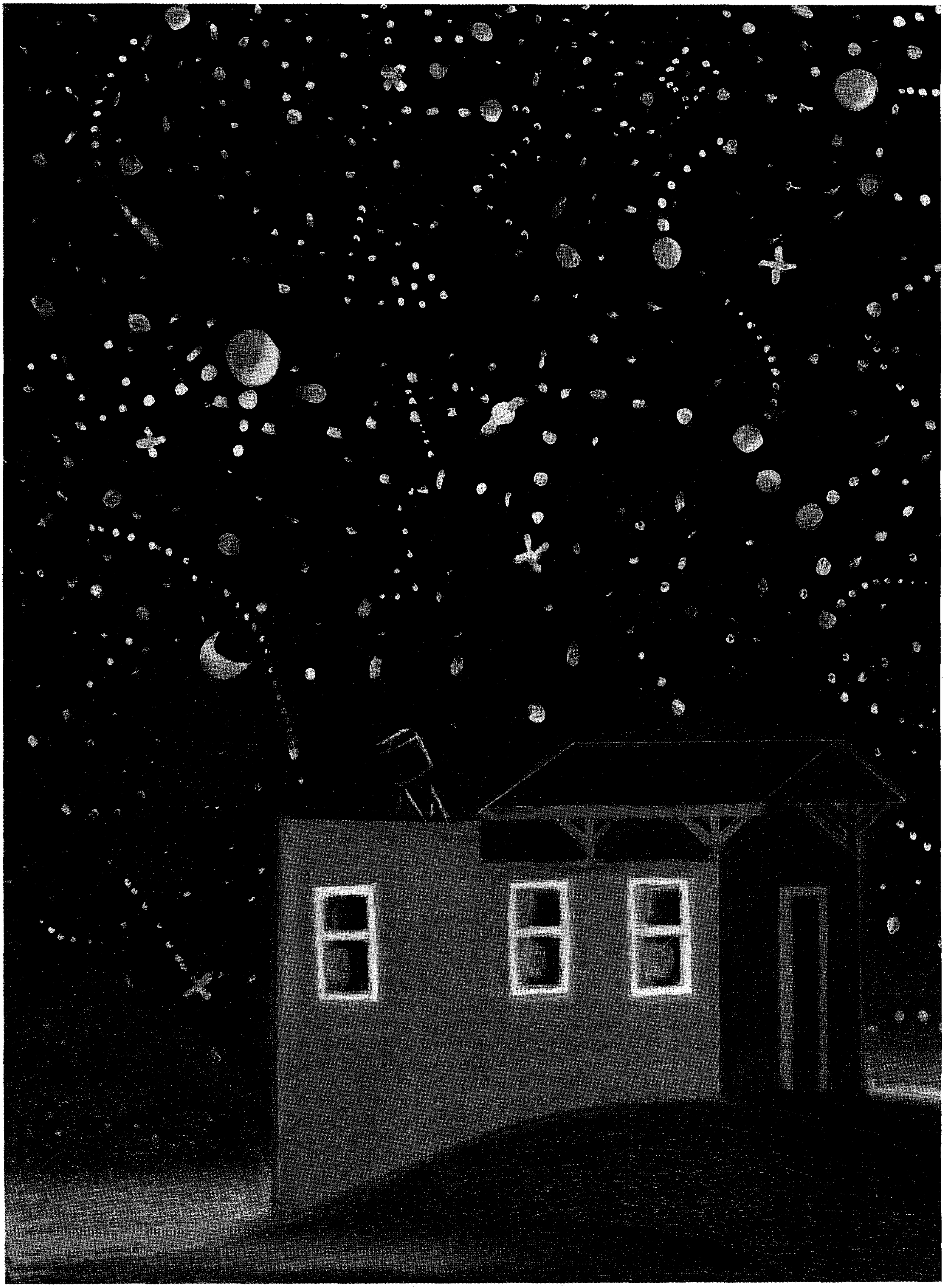
There were some Buddhist monks on the stage—the first that many of the people at Anlong Veng who were under thirty had ever seen. Benedictions were chanted, and then military men gave brief speeches, celebrating the reunification of Cambodian brothers in arms. The Khmer Rouge defectors stood stock still, dressed in their Chinese uniforms, of olive pajamas, olive Mao caps, and sandals cut from old tires. They appeared to be neither engaged nor uninterested in the ceremony—more as if they were waiting it out. When the speeches were over, the defectors lined up and filed forward to receive new kit bags. Then they retired behind the stage, stripped down to their shorts, and climbed into their new uniforms.

I watched an old man changing his gear. He was slight, with wiry muscles, and he required the help of a Royal Cambodian Armed Forces officer to get his feet into his socks. I asked if he had ever worn socks before. He hadn't. He was sixty-two years old, and he said he had been fighting with the Khmer Rouge since 1973. I asked what he thought about the reintegration ceremony. He said he was very happy to have his freedoms and his liberty. I asked if he felt that this day marked a victory or a surrender. He was a careful old man, who had survived and killed, killed and survived for a very long time in circumstances in which a wrong answer could quickly put an end to one's survival. He said, "I'm happy to have spent twenty-five years in the bush, fighting."

He didn't like the boots in his new kit—too small, he said, although his feet were tiny and the boots were generously proportioned. He pulled his flip-flops back on over his socks, and stood up. The cuffs of his new uniform dangled as if from a scarecrow. He took off his old Mao cap and placed a Royal Cambodian army cap on his head. And with that he became a fighter for the Kingdom of Cambodia—"Nation, Religion, King"—and eligible to vote.

As the helicopter lifted off from Anlong Veng, I counted at least a hundred more people aboard than there had been when we came up from Phnom Penh. Nearly all the additional passengers were wearing new government military uniforms.

"Let him be dead," King Sihanouk said when Pol Pot died—as if that were possible. ♦



Supernovas are conspicuous, but the odds that one will appear in a given galaxy on a given night are longer than ten thousand to one.

ANNALS OF ASTRONOMY

SEEING IN THE DARK

Why are amateur stargazers, armed with little more than homemade equipment, making some of the biggest discoveries in space?

BY TIMOTHY FERRIS

THE sun is setting in a clear late-autumn sky, so I hike the hundred and ninety-nine paces from the house up the hill to Rocky Hill Observatory. A two-day storm has scrubbed the sky clean of haze and left the fruit trees in the orchard bare, dead leaves spread in soggy puddles of russet and yellow at their feet like venders' wares. The vineyards flanking the path are soaked, their upper leaves hammered into sheets of glistening gold, and the ones below hanging limp and stained the tea-brown of ruined suède gloves. Toward the top of the dirt path, lined up along its west side, stand three farm structures, each with sides of railroad-red clapboard and roofs of corrugated steel. The first is a barn, the second a tractor shed, and the third, pitched out over the hillside, is the observatory. Its roof is built to roll off.

Inside, I step around the cylindrical concrete column that supports the telescope one story above. Two feet thick, rooted in clay far below, the column stands at the heart of the observatory but touches it nowhere—this to prevent its picking up vibrations. Upstairs, I'm gratified to find that the telescope, safe beneath the low roof, has weathered the storm bone-dry. When I release a big red safety latch and heave my weight against the nearest aluminum stud, the roof gives a creak and starts rolling on its eight steel wheels, until it has cleared away, and suddenly I'm outdoors again, under a sky of unblemished and darkening blue. I tilt the telescope skyward and reach in through the struts of its skeleton tube to uncover the concave primary mirror, which returns a fleeting, fun-house image of my face—big, goofy jowls and receding brown hair—as if to underscore the preposterousness of my primate pretensions to learn something about the cosmos. A little muffin fan draws air over the mirror to cool it down. While waiting, I sit at the desk, switch on a small red night-vision light, and open an entry on the ruled page of the observatory log with the date, the time, and a note on conditions: "Sky cloudless. Light SW wind. Humidity sixty-seven per cent and falling."

I consult a favorite old star chart. Its vanilla pages, crossed by thin grid lines on which the stars and nebulae hang like grapes on a trellis, are dotted with inked-in notes on telescopic observations I've made over the years: the position of a small comet, glimpsed from a balcony in Hollywood, that was chugging across the sky so fast you could see it move; an inked-in dot locating a quasar, its light a billion years old, extinct and unforgiving; and lots of notes on the distances of stars and nebulae—part of a lifelong effort to comprehend our immediate neighborhood, out to just a couple of thousand light-years or so, in three dimensions. But most of the inscriptions refer to galaxies, each the home of about a hundred billion stars. I built the observatory, in 1993, mainly to search for supernovas—exploding stars—in galaxies beyond the Milky Way.

While the sky darkens, I take a moment to survey the horizon, looking west. I'm standing only sixty miles by road from the San Francisco end of the Golden Gate Bridge, yet except for twinkling lights in a couple of distant farmhouses, the sole signs of civilization are two fans of white light, one from behind a ridge to the west-northwest—that's Santa Rosa—and the other, fainter, behind a stand of giant oaks to the northeast, which comes from the Highway 12 corridor.

A few stars have now come out, and I train the telescope on three of them, marvelling, as always, at the purity of their colors—red Aldebaran, sun-yellow Capella, ice-blue Vega. Centering each in turn in a high-power eyepiece, I enter them in the telescope's computer, a black box the size of a pack of cigarettes. The computer now knows what's up. For the remainder of the night it will respond, whenever it's told the designation of a given galaxy, by indicating just where to aim the telescope along its two axes—one aligned to Earth's axis of rotation, the other to Earth's equator—to bring that galaxy into view.

I aim the telescope at the Triangulum galaxy, which, at a distance of less than three million light-years from Earth, is by intergalactic standards a local object, and, indeed, belongs to the cluster of galaxies that includes our own galaxy, the Milky Way, and is called by astronomers the Local Group. And there it is, looming large, its spiral arms tangled with glowing clouds of gas and so rangy that they spill out beyond the field of view in all directions. That's one of the satisfactions of astronomy—that all these things, unimaginably big or small or hot or cold as they may be, are really out there. Like giant squid, and unlike, say, logical positivism, they confront the mind with the regality of the materially real, even though no human hand will ever touch them. I open a looseleaf binder full of galaxy photographs and check Triangulum's photo against what I'm seeing in the sky. If a star has exploded there, it will look like a "new"—nova—star, visible in the telescope but not to be found in the previously taken photograph. Actually, what's new is not the star but its titanic demise, set off when thermonuclear fuel at its core is exhausted, causing the star to collapse and then resound in a literally disastrous detonation. None in Triangulum this time, but I linger a moment before moving on, just to look. At this moment, I am absurdly happy. I

LORENZO MATTOTTI

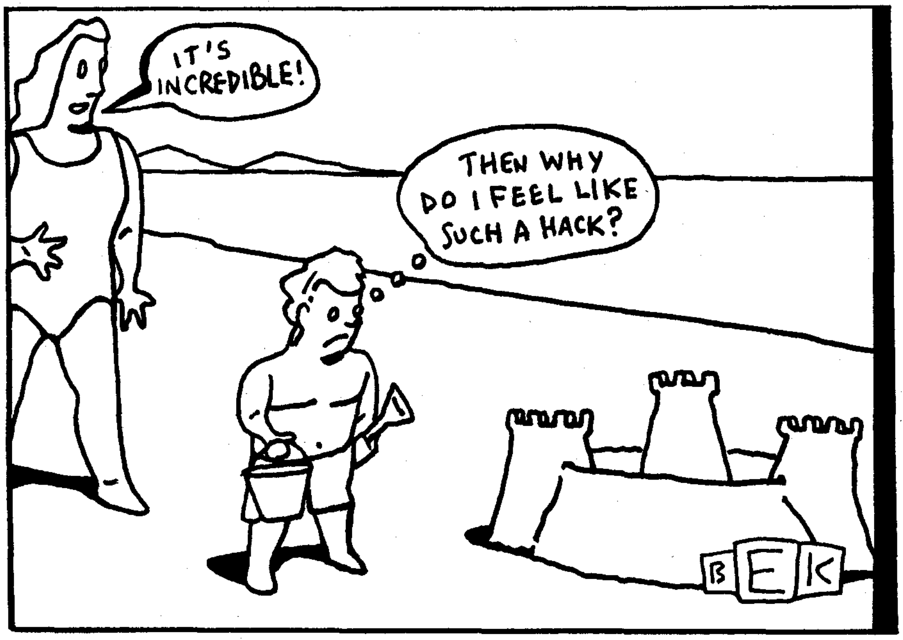
feel like the early French balloonist who, once aloft, refused to come down.

SUPERNOVAS are conspicuous—just by looking through this modest telescope I can hope to spot one out to a distance of a hundred million light-years or so—but the odds that one will appear in a given galaxy on a given night are longer than ten thousand to one. Trying to discover a supernova is like fishing for trout in a stream where the average angler never in a lifetime catches a trout. Even so, an occasional lucky observer has discovered more than one. The reigning champion is Robert Evans, a minister in New South Wales, Australia, who has memorized the star fields surrounding hundreds of galaxies and scans them at a sprightly pace with a telescope that he rolls out onto his driveway at night. Evans has discovered thirty-seven supernovas, an all-time record for a visual observer. (Only robotic telescopes have done better.) In Texas, a few years ago, I met a man who had discovered a supernova while he was looking at galaxies and wasn't even trying to find one. He just happened to see a star that seemed as if it didn't belong there, so he checked it against an observatory photograph, and, sure enough, there had been no star there. He called the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was confirmed the next day as its discoverer. I managed to congratulate him, summoning a sickly smile.

Supernovas are important to galactic ecology: they cook light atoms into heavy ones and then spew these back into space; all the gold in the universe, among other elements, originated in this way. The greatest interest they hold for me, however, lies in their potential as "standard candles" for establishing the distances of remote galaxies, a matter that astronomers disagree about to the tune of something like thirty per cent. Supernovas can be seen across vast distances, so if their intrinsic brightness were ascertained they could be used to establish the expansion rate—and thereby the age and perhaps the destiny—of the universe. But nailing down the intrinsic brightness of supernovas requires that their spectra and light curves be recorded and catalogued in enough detail to lay bare the exploding stars' behavior. Professional observatories can't very well devote so much time searching against long odds, but amateurs like me can.

Also, it's a great excuse for gaping at galaxies. Nothing is quite like the sight of a galaxy—stately, self-possessed, a murk of mingled stars and gas clouds, so distant that its light is older than the human species, and so commodious as to contain, I should think, more stories than anyone, anywhere, can ever come to know.

ROCKY HILL OBSERVATORY LOG, MARCH 23, 1994. A half-dozen eight-year-olds line up to view the moon through the eighteen-inch telescope. As I watch each teeter on the top of the little stepladder and peer into the eyepiece, something remarkable happens: by the cold moonlight—a sort of spotlight, painting an ill-focussed portrait of the moon on the eye, eye socket, and a bit of brow and cheek—each child seems transformed into an adult. Nini, red hair and freckles, becomes a woman in her forties, the prime of her considerable athleticism now past but her effervescent spirit unsubdued. Nion, a shy and appealing boy, is suddenly a tall and elegantly commanding adult who might be director of a foundation. Mischievous Kathryn is intent, capable, no-nonsense; in business for herself perhaps. My son looks only a bit under my own present age. Poised and serious, he offers a vision of a time when I myself have become a memory. I am reminded that everything we see in the sky belongs to the past, and that children in their similarities to us and their differences from us embody our concept of the future. We elders fall away into the past, like leaves from trees in autumn, but the young fall from us, too, their shouts of glee and apprehension echoing back as they dive toward the depths of the future.


IT'S INCREDIBLE!
THEN WHY DO I FEEL LIKE SUCH A HACK?
BEK

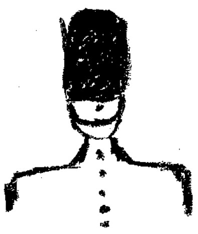
I FIRST became enchanted with astronomy when I was about eight and my parents gave me a book entitled "A Child's History of the World," written in 1924 by an American schoolmaster named V. M. Hillyer. The book began with an account of the formation of the solar system, which, although it was inaccurate, got across the essential fact that the Earth has not always been here—that it came into being at a finite point in the past and that everything here, from the birds and fishes to the loamy soil underfoot, was once part of a star. I found this amazing, and still do. It meant that even the most mundane affairs are, at some level, astronomical. I started reading everything I could find about astronomy, and soon I was pestering my parents to get me a telescope. It came as an early Christmas present, in the fall of 1956, in time for an especially favorable "opposition," or close passage, of Mars, within thirty-six million miles of Earth. In the front yard of a small house in Key Biscayne, Florida, I crouched at the eyepiece and scrutinized the squiggly image, the color of a drop of blood, waiting for moments of still air when I could catch sight of Martian continents and polar caps. The future seemed pregnant with the promise of discovery.

Aspiring stargazers, like aspiring musicians, typically start learning on inferior instruments, and my first telescope was suitably wretched—a skinny Bakelite tube mounted irresolutely on top of a spindly tripod. Nobody else could see much of anything through this telescope, and I did not have a great deal of initial success, but soon I came to cherish it as an instrument of deliverance. Through it I was introduced to the sand-colored rings of Saturn, the young, blue-white stars of Orion, the old, golden stars of the Omega Centauri cluster, and a thousand other things, all of them so outlandish as to balloon one's sense of the plausible.

Accompanied by a stargazing friend of mine named Chuck, I started observing late at night or getting up hours before dawn, and, as happens if you spend a lot of time outdoors at night, we saw some amazing things. One dark night, the whole neighborhood was suddenly bathed in something approaching sunlight, with green coconut palms waving against a blue sky, all of it shifting, the shadows clocking rapidly from north to south. Looking up, we saw a mighty fireball of a meteor, yellow with a red halo and brighter than the moon, trucking northwest and leaving behind a fading white trail flecked with gold. Visions like this produced a sensation that I did not know how to express.

Amateur astronomy—astronomy for the love of it—is enjoying a renaissance these days, in the course of which it has, happily, begun to reunite itself with professional astronomy. Before the twentieth century there was little distinction between the two. Galileo, when he first trained a telescope on the night sky, was a professional professor (that is, he got paid for teaching) but an amateur astronomer. William Herschel, perhaps the most acute astronomical observer of all time (in 1781, he discovered the planet Uranus), was a composer and organist who spent practically every spare moment under the stars: when he was conducting the orchestra at Bath, he sometimes even rushed home during intermissions just to get a few minutes at the telescope. George Ellery Hale, who built the big telescopes at Mt. Wilson, near Los Angeles, and Palomar, near San Diego, was a professional who had started as an amateur, and he never lost touch with his roots. Ironically, it was Hale's big telescopes that split astronomy into amateur and professional camps. Everybody wanted to use them, but only a few people could, so access was restricted to highly trained professionals.

Exclusionary though it may have been, this emphasis on professionalism did get results. At Mt. Wilson, Harlow Shapley (from Princeton University) established that the sun is situated toward one edge of a galaxy, and Edwin Hubble (from the University of Chicago) discovered that the galaxies are being continuously separated from one another through the expansion of cosmic space, while at Palomar Allan Sandage (from Caltech) dated the ages of the stars, and Maarten Schmidt (from the University of Leiden) found that quasars are the fiery nuclei of young galaxies whose light has taken billions of years to reach us. Top pros like these became superstars, lionized in the press as hawkeyed lookouts who relentlessly probed the mysteries of deep space.



Which they did, and quite credibly, too. But they sacrificed a lot for such attainments, in that observing their way wasn't a whole lot of fun. To be among the chosen few, up there in the cold and the dark, riding in the observer's cage, with icy stars shining through a dome slit above and with starlight puddled below in a mirror the size of a trout pond, was indubitably romantic, but it was also nerve-racking. Big-telescope observing was rather like making love to a glamorous movie star: one was alert to the honor of the thing, but aware that plenty of suitors were eager to step in if one's performance faltered.

So it went, for about half a century. Professionals observed big things far away; amateurs showed schoolchildren the rings of Saturn through a tripod-mounted spyglass at the state fair. Inevitably, many of the professionals came to disdain the amateurs. If the professionals happened to discover a comet or an asteroid (solar-system objects, amateur stuff), they sometimes didn't even tell anybody about it, for fear they'd besmirch their résumé with something infra dig.

Then, in recent years, the amateurs began returning to prominence. Many reasons for this could be cited, principally technological advances that brought professional-grade equipment within reach of amateurs. But the proximate cause was an eccentric San Francisco amateur named John Dobson.

DOBSON is the Martin Luther of the astronomical reformation. The version of his credo most often cited by born-again amateurs was spelled out in a talk he gave a decade ago to a hard-core group of amateur telescope-makers, declaring, "To me it's not so much how big your telescope is, or how accurately your optics are figured, or how beautiful the pictures you can take with it—it's how many people in this vast world less privileged than you have had a chance through your telescope to see and understand this universe. That is the one thing that drives me!"

To the casual observer, John Dobson comes off as an aging hippie with a gaudily painted telescope that looks as if it had been run over by a truck; thousands have encountered him on the streets of San Francisco—a spare, ebullient figure who sets up a battered telescope and calls out to passersby to "Come see Jupiter!" or "Come see the moon!" and then whispers facts in their ears while they peer into the eyepiece. But astronomical sophisticates recognize his telescopes as "Dobsonians," the carbines of revolution. This man, with this instrument, changed his world.

The innovative thing about Dobsonians is that they're cheap. They employ the same simple, effective design that Isaac Newton dreamed up when he wanted to see a comet and that remains the most popular form of astronomical telescope in the world today: a tube with a parabolic mirror at the bottom, which gathers starlight, and a small, flat secondary mirror near the top. You can build a big Dobsonian as readily as you might a small traditional Newtonian reflector, or buy one for about a fifth of the cost.

You can't buy a Dobsonian from John Dobson, though. He refuses to patent the design or to profit from it. Poverty is his habit, and was the mother of his invention. Born in China, he studied chemistry at Berkeley and in 1944 he became a monk in the Vedanta Society, part of the Rama Krishna movement, serving in monasteries in San Francisco and Sacramento. Enchanted by astronomy since boyhood, he started making telescopes (and was eventually banished from the monastery). His tao of poverty meant that he had to invent ways of making them much more cheaply than they had ever been made before, and at this he proved to be something of a genius. Rather than relying on a piece of fine optical glass, Dobson salvaged discarded portholes and the bottoms of gallon jugs. For the telescope tube, he scrounged up cardboard Sonotubes, used for pouring concrete at construction sites. Proper telescope mountings are expensive, so Dobson cut a box out of scrap plywood. He plants these telescopes on street corners and in national parks, attracting long lines of neophyte stargazers.

Aside from a few media stars like Patrick Moore and the late Carl Sagan, John Dobson has probably introduced more people to stargazing than anyone else of his time. Before Dobson, the typical amateur had a reflector with a light-gathering mirror six or eight inches in diameter. Today, the "star parties" where amateur astronomers congregate are dotted with Brobdingnagian Dobsonians, which have mirrors as much as twenty-four, even thirty, inches in diameter, their tubes towering into the darkness. The greatest risk of amateur astronomy today is that of falling from a rickety ladder high in the dark while peering through a Dobsonian.

Along with John Dobson's innovation, two technological developments that have been responsible for the return of the amateur are the Internet and the invention of the light-sensing charge-coupled device, or C.C.D. Home-video cameras use C.C.D.s and, as most people notice sooner or later, sometimes to their embarrassment, those cameras can record images in light almost too dim for people to see in. Attach a C.C.D. to a midsized Dobsonian, at a total cost of a few thousand dollars, or even less, and you have an instrument whose light-gathering power is comparable to that of the Hale telescope at Palomar in the pre-C.C.D. era.

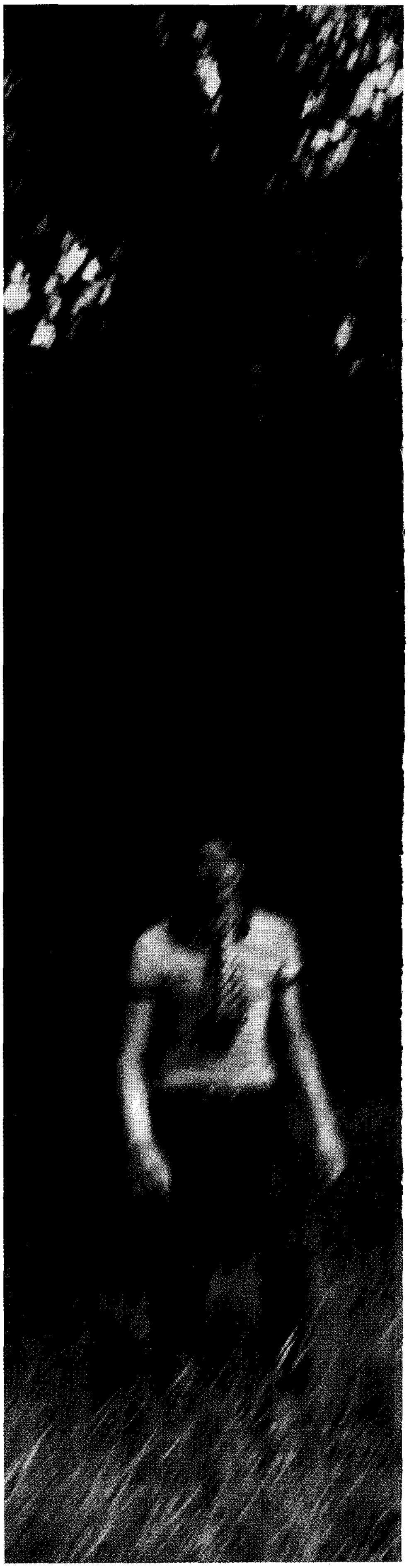
Communications have undergone a similar revolution. It used to be that an amateur who managed to discover a comet or a supernova would send word of the discovery in a telegram to the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, which, if it checked out, would mail postcards alerting paying subscribers at observatories around the world. Now observers learn of discoveries through the Internet and can have a look for themselves within hours instead of days.

If the growing number of telescopes out there may be said to have given the Earth new eyes, the Net has fashioned it a set of optic nerves. Professionals have started converting underutilized telescopes to remote operation: slaves to the Internet, these telescopes make observations of specified galaxies and nebulae on order, for anybody who wants them, and automatically E-mail back the resulting C.C.D. images. It's becoming possible for amateurs and professionals alike to carry out extended research projects using telescopes that they have never actually visited.

It is also easier just to get lucky. In 1994, after amateur astronomers in Georgia discovered a supernova in the Whirlpool galaxy, thirty-five million light-years from Earth, an even earlier image of the same supernova was found in a C.C.D. picture that two students, Heather Tartara and Melody Spence, at Oil City High School, in Pennsylvania, had had taken by a thirty-inch robotic telescope at Leuschner Observatory, operated by the University of California–Berkeley. The image, which Ms. Tartara said they had requested because the Whirlpool galaxy "just seemed interesting," turned out to be one of the earliest pictures ever taken of an exploding star.

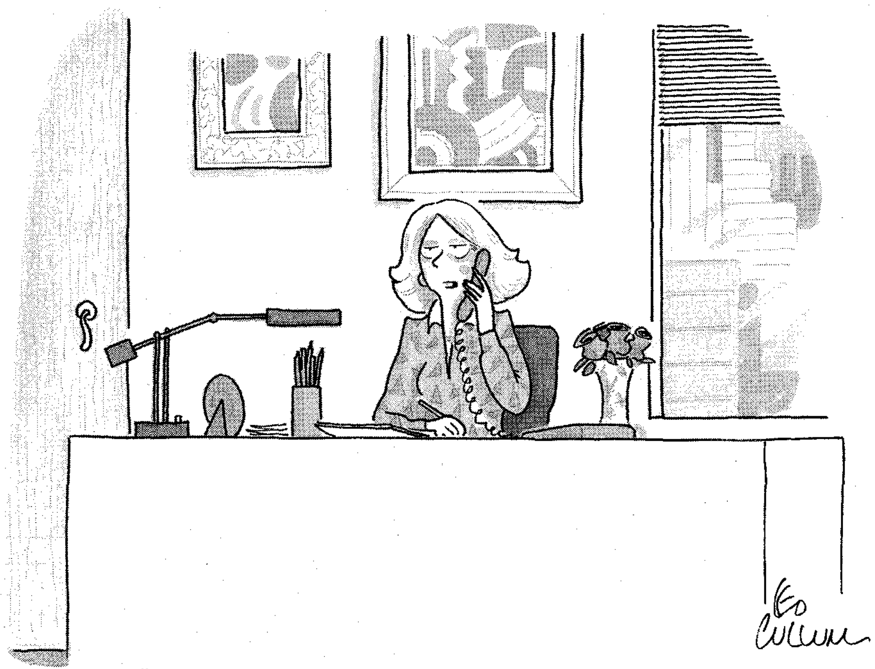
ROCKY HILL OBSERVATORY LOG, JULY 26, 1996. A big fat moon extinguishes nearly all the faint, deep-space objects, and towering limestone-and-charcoal caverns made of clouds are marching under it. Making a virtue of necessity, I try my hand at observing lunar features, something I've rarely done since adolescence. I mask most of the telescope mirror to make the view not intolerably bright, then set out to orient myself, using a lunar globe for reference. Having forgotten most of what little selenian cartography I ever knew, I find myself trudging back and forth between telescope and globe, as comically indeterminate as an amateur actor in a dinner-theatre production of Brecht's "Galileo." The sorry affair comes to a close when a rising west wind blows the lunar globe off its stand and sends it rolling across the observatory floor, with me in clumsy pursuit lest it fall down the stairs. I close the observatory, grumbling to myself that the craters of the moon are, after all, just so many crash sites, an insurance adjuster's nightmare of overlapping impact craters that, were they not named for philosophers and scientists, might as well be called Bango!, Whap!, Oops!, and There Goes the Neighborhood. Like many another deep-space stargazer, I've seldom been able to sustain much enthusiasm for the moon.

AMATEUR astronomers, with their new technological power and their rising status in the world, have begun doing things that until recently would not have been thought to lie within the grasp of what are, after all, hobbyists. There are amateur radio astronomers who record the screams of colliding galaxies, chronicle the ionized trails of meteors falling in the daytime, or listen for signals from alien civiliza-



SHOWCASE *The fashion photographer Ellen*
and the playfulness of Jacques Henri Lartigue.

on Unwerth's unpretentious, intimate photographs reveal a sensibility that lies somewhere between the sexiness of Helmut Newton Two new collections of her work, "Couples" (which includes this swing tableau) and "Wicked," will be published by te Neues in the fall.



"Mr. Dyer says he has no interest in speaking to anyone who would remain on hold for so long."

tions. Some amateurs with fancy solar filters observe jets of plasma arcing off the surface of the sun. Others take photometric measurements of the cycling magnitudes of pulsating stars and eclipsing binary stars. David Levy, an amateur who observes from his back yard, in a remote suburb of Tucson, was the co-discoverer, with the professionals Carolyn and Eugene Shoemaker, of the comet that crashed into Jupiter in a string of hydrogen-bomb-scale impacts in July of 1994, awakening humanity to the dangers of what such a comet might do if it hit Earth. Don Parker, an anesthesiologist in Florida, takes C.C.D. images of Mars that rival everything this side of the Hubble Space Telescope by using a sixteen-inch telescope mounted on a deck outside his house, in Coral Gables. Jack Newton, who built a twenty-five-inch telescope in his house, on Vancouver Island, distributes via the Internet exquisite color images he has made of galaxies. The "great white spot" on Saturn, a rare atmospheric phenomenon that astronomers using Hubble studied with intense interest, was discovered, in September of 1990, by Stuart Wilber, an amateur astronomer who lovingly constructs lacquered hardwood telescopes in the garage of his home.

Barbara Wilson, a mother of two who teaches astronomy at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, is said to rank among the world's most acute visual observers. She presses the limits, tracing out dark rivers of dust that run through the disk of the Milky Way like veins in marble, and trying for dim and distant galaxies that have been photographed but that no human eye has ever glimpsed. Her stargazing pals labelled her the AINTNO Queen, the acronym standing for the Association of Invisible Nebula and Things Nobody Observes. She responded by compiling a wish list of a hundred virtually impossible objects that she hopes, somehow, to see. Entries in the AINTNO 100 include footprints on the moon. I asked her how many she had managed to discern so far. "Not a one," she replied, with a sunny smile. (Since our conversation, Barbara and others have managed to see a couple of the targets on her list.)

One dark night in West Texas, after I'd proved myself not hopelessly inept by sighting, through her twenty-inch telescope and with her guidance, an obscure galaxy called Molonglo 3, situated about halfway across the universe, Barbara and I tried to observe a set of gravitational-lensing effects recently discovered by the Hubble telescope. These delicate arcs are the images of galaxies that are billions of light-years away, whose light is distorted by the gravitational field of an intervening cluster of galaxies. Given that it had taken Hubble to discover them, we both doubted that it was even theoretically possible for the human eye to see the lenses under any circumstances, much less through a Dobsonian set up in a dusty field, but Barbara insisted that we wouldn't be sure unless we tried. And we did try, for more than an hour, using the Hubble photograph as a guide. We failed, but this didn't bother Barbara. "I've been kicked in the butt many times by such objects," she said cheerfully. "About half the time I fail."

"The universe *will* kick you in the butt," she added, when we met again the next day, at a picnic table on a dude ranch where an annual event known as the Texas Star Party was being held. "You can't be a know-it-all. The first time that you think you know something, the sky will knock you down to size. But it's all so beautiful. You look at a hurricane on a map and you see its spiral structure, and you watch the spiral structure of water swirling down the drain in a bathtub, and you look up in the sky and you see these spiral formations of galaxies—all the continuity in nature, this repetition of pattern. It just makes you feel good to be alive. Every little, tiny thing is so detailed, and the closer you look the more detailed it gets. It's just a wonderful universe we live in. To me, it's a visual world, and I just want to see."

ROCKY HILL OBSERVATORY LOG, 3 A.M., NOVEMBER 9, 1997. As is often the case when you're stargazing, it's getting pretty cold. I'm wearing long underwear, wool socks, polypro sock liners, chinchilla pants, a padded flannel shirt, a down vest, an Arctic parka, and a wool cap, but to operate the telescope controls requires fingerless gloves that have long since left my fingers numb, and when I bend over the eyepiece my eyes tend to tear up in the chilly wind. An ounce of brandy would be warming, but alcohol is said to reduce the eye's night-vision capacity, which in observing galaxies is already severely pressed. One is using not the cones but the rods, which are more sensitive to low light but also poorer at discerning detail. Moreover, the human retina is constructed upside down . . . so that the optic nerves, for some evolutionary reason, come up on the light-gathering side of the retina instead of behind it, then converge and drop back toward the brain through a hole near the center of the retina. The brain pretties things up by paving over the hole with a concoction of portraiture borrowed from the immediately surrounding part of the visual field, so in day-to-day life we don't notice that there's a black hole in the center of everything we see. But the trick is exposed when peering with one eye through a telescope at the night sky: dim things disappear if you look right at them. Deep-space observers combat this effect by employing averted vision, meaning that they look slightly away from the objects of their attention. Averted vision is the deepest vision.

WHEN I set out to build Rocky Hill Observatory, in Sonoma County, I found a nice, level patch of ground with good local "seeing," as astronomers call it, which resulted from a smooth, laminar flow of clean Pacific air wafting in from the west. The trouble was that a pair of tall old oaks obscured most of the eastern sky. While I was pondering this problem, in the summer of 1992, I got a call from an architect named John Miller, inviting me to address an annual conference of the American Institute of Architects.

"We don't pay an honorarium," he said, "but we'll give you a nice case of wine."

"I don't need any wine," I replied, looking out over the vineyards.

Miller proved to be an amiable and intelligent conversationalist, and when we got to talking about my plans for the observatory he offered to trade me an architectural consultation for my talk. We met for lunch in Santa Rosa a few weeks later and went out to the site. Miller ambled around it, idly picking up a leaf here and a scrap of bark there, chewing on a twig. Then he announced that I would have to chop down the trees.

"Some consultation," I said. "Those trees are more than a century old. I don't want to cut them down."

Miller smiled, poked around some more, then picked up a weathered piece of cardboard, took out a pencil, and sketched on it. "The thing to do," he said, "is to put it out over the hillside, like this."

The sketch alarmed me. What had been a simple one-story structure would now be, at its westward end, a three-story building. But I got an orchard ladder, put it where the telescope pier would be, and climbed up to have a look. Everything fell into place. It was perfect.

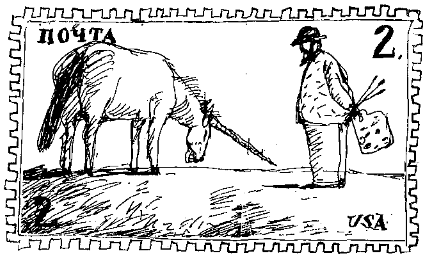
"This is going to be more expensive than I'd planned for," I grumbled, climbing down the ladder.

Miller smiled again. "Of course," he said. "What do you think architects are for?"

With the site settled, I started questioning veteran observatory builders about the specifics of design. Their advice was mostly ecological: If you've got a good site, build on it with as little impact as possible, so it stays good. The most concerted advice came from Clyde Tombaugh, the discoverer, in 1930, of the planet Pluto. When I went to see him, in Mesilla, New Mexico, he took me out behind his house, hard by a trailer park, and showed me his two telescopes, both constructed by hand and equipped with mirrors he had ground himself. Neither had any enclosure; they'd stood out there in the desert air, night and day, for years. "The polar axis on this one came off my dad's 1910 Buick," Tombaugh said, patting the nine-inch telescope. "I finished the mirror in the spring of 1928. The Smithsonian Institution wanted me to give it this telescope, but I said, 'I can't really do that. I'm still using it.' "

Tombaugh climbed up into the scaffolding of the sixteen-inch telescope, a steel-and-glass affair that loomed up into the dark, skeletal as an equation. Tombaugh was then in his mid-eighties, a bent old man, but he swarmed over the instrument's ladders, platforms, and steps with spiderlike agility, winding its gravity-driven clockwork drive and hoisting the tube into place, while I struggled after him, furiously taking notes. "You should be at least eight feet above the ground!" he called down to me. "Up here, your feet are sixteen feet above ground when you're observing the zenith. The best thing to have around a telescope is wood. Concrete is murder. A skeleton tube is best, to avoid air currents trapped inside. If you must have a closed tube, line it with cork. All this is hand-bolted, not a weld on it. Six tons of foundations, one ton of steel. I tap-fitted the bolts—drilled the holes a little too small for them, so they'd stay tight. The whole thing cost about five hundred dollars."

He then shouted, "It's a super telescope! A humdinger. With this scope, I've seen markings on Ganymede"—a satellite of Jupiter, about the size of Earth's moon but two thousand times as far away. "To do that, you have to have some awful good seeing, and some awful good optics."



When he noticed that I'd finally caught up with him, he lowered his voice. "Very few people," he said quietly, "have seen as much on the planets as I've seen with this telescope."

In building Rocky Hill Observatory, I took the advice Clyde had given me, and the place works fine. One day soon after it was finished, I was loading shelves on the floor below the telescope deck with some old astronomy books my mother had sent me from the house on Key Biscayne. Among them was a faded blue looseleaf binder in which I'd kept observing notes and sketches of the moon, Mars, and Jupiter that I'd made as a boy. The cover was stained from the floodwaters of Hurricane Betsy, but the contents were well preserved. As I was paging through it, a sheet slipped out from the back and fell to the floor. On it, ruled in hard pencil, was a drawing that I'd made, at about the age of fourteen, of the floor plan of an observatory. It was envisioned as a one-story structure, not canted out on a hillside, as in John Miller's innovation, but otherwise it was almost identical to the building I was standing in. All dreams, as they say, begin in childhood.

ROCKY HILL OBSERVATORY LOG, 5:30 A.M., NOVEMBER 9, 1997. Almost dawn now. I linger over the sight of the Whirlpool, a face-on spiral galaxy, floating on an ocean of brightening blue sky like a jellyfish adrift on the sea. Our local owl sounds one last hoot, then falls silent. I call her Minerva, after Hegel's aphorism "The owl of Minerva flies only at dusk," perhaps the only line of Hegel's that has meant much to me. Taking her silence as a signal that the night has ended, I heel the telescope to its stowed position, cap the main mirror, wrap the secondary mirror in a little felt bag taken from a showy bottle of Canadian whiskey, put the cold, weighty eyepieces away, close the roof, and trudge down the hill, frost crunching under my feet. No supernovas discovered tonight, but the light from a million of them is out there, rushing toward us, and perhaps some night I will be the first to catch sight of one. A late-homing bat flits across the whitewashed sky and dives into the dark heart of a stand of oaks, bringing to mind Blake's verse "The Bat that flits at close of Eve / Has left the Brain that won't Believe."

AT home, a few coals still glow in the fire. I undress and slip into bed. The last thing I see against the darkness of my closed eyelids is the Whirlpool galaxy, afloat on its blue ocean, indelible. ♦

FICTION

WHAT I HEAR

Flying to a daughter in need.

BY MARY ROBISON

ONE hill after another, this bumpy flight. My view is of the void. If anyone asked, I could make known my opinion of these seat covers. Or watch the beverage cart take forever. How does it fit, coming down the aisle? Eight inches—I'm measuring with my eyes. Four inches on each side.

Christian, asleep in the middle seat next to me, agreed to come along on this Alaska trip, travel up and back with me, on my dime. I can see the little tattoo inside his right forearm, from his Navy SEAL days: a face that looks like maybe Magellan above a map of some ocean or other. He's not quite my boyfriend. He's been divorced three years but remains in love with her. She's always on his mind: Midge.

I'm famished. I *bought* cashews, so where are they?

Christian comes out of his troubled sleep and says he feels rejuvenated. He doesn't realize his face is stained with tears.

The woman across the aisle is ripping perfume cards out of the free magazines. She's also ignoring her child, who's saying, "Mom, remember that girl? Mom, Mom. That girl, remember?" If I were the child, I'd stop that this minute and look out the window. Those weird little metal blades sticking up from the wing top. Over there will be Mt. McKinley. Or Denali. Whatever.

My snack from the cart is a bar of old banana cake, stuck to its cellophane; tough like a sponge. Where are my cashews? Why didn't I bring ninety-five dollars' worth of snacks?

Perhaps Christian could use some advice on forgetting Midge. "Detach—or at least reëvaluate," I tell him. "Focus on her bad features. That annoying fakey laugh."

"You think it's *fake*?" he asks.

"To me, yes. Maybe not. What about her parting words to you? When she said you were a lizard?"

"She did?" he says. "I don't remember that. Midge called me a lizard?"

"It's what people told me," I say as he starts to puddle up.

Below us there are mountains now, glinting with sunfire, grouped around Anchorage. It looks like a brooch.

"It's not about you," Christian says. That's probably true.

"Look," I begin, and he does—looks at me. "What about the time you called and Midge pretended she was someone else on the phone? Pretended she didn't know you?"

He waves his hand to stop me. In some ways, this entire flight has been something to forget.

ON the bus ride to our hotel, Christian reads aloud some stuff from a folder. " 'Edged by the fierce beauty of the Chugach and the waters of Cook Inlet, Anchorage is cosmopolitan but with the Alaskan wild always at its back.' "

"Plus it's eighty-two degrees and only June," I say. "Look, there's a Kinko's. Hey, an Eyewitness News truck. And—oop, a Cirrus machine."

We stop and let off some passengers, but Christian and I stay on, headed for our hotel: the Wallchart or the Woodwork. I can't get the name right. It's still daylight, of course—one of their days—but only for a few hours more. Christian asks me about Pammie, my daughter. It's funny: she's the whole reason I've come here but this is the first time either of us has mentioned her name.

STILL the same daylight, but now it's another day. Christian looks groomed and handsome, and even seems glad to be here. He excuses himself and disappears—off, he says, to ask the way to Matanuska, the home of the softball-size radish. I have coffee and—I can't put it off—go to see Pammie.

Here in the tiny box of a house she never leaves. She wears a coat indoors, and cheap red boots. Her legs are bare, I notice. We don't really talk. She's busily scribbling notes in a college notebook while she watches the TV—a black-and-white seventies portable, older than she is. The picture is a muck of gray halftones. There's no black or white.

Pammie doesn't want me to replace the TV or buy her better red boots, or to say that everything else in her life is trash that should be hauled off to the dump. She wants me to stay seated, here on this futon chair, and get interested in this cartoon show. A Heckle and Jeckle. I try to. I do. And time goes by.

She got off track, it'll be a year ago this October. Since one night when she was sitting here, a perfectly normal, only a little bit messed up junior-year anthropology major, holed up here studying for comps. A crazy man crashed in, nobody she knew. He smashed furniture, broke her eyeglasses, broke her wrist, broke her cheekbone, three of her teeth. Then he left, got away. The doctors did a great job; gave her a new face, if not quite hers.

"Am I bothering you?" I ask her. If I am, she doesn't say. Should I ask her again to open these crinkly presents I've brought? She's in something like pain when it comes to opening gifts, so I really have to think. Or I can be quiet. I don't need entertainment. That pretty hair barrette is sliding down. No, I won't touch it.

THE taxi-driver taking me back to the airport smiles around and asks, "Who am I?"

"I'm sorry?" I say.

"Guess my name," he says.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

"Ah, let me see—" It could be anything. "Sidney?" I say. Wherever that guess came from, he's nodding.

"You saw my license," he says. "So, something harder. My birth sign."

"You're a Gemini" comes out of my mouth, and Sidney nods. He's not so happy this time. He says, "I bet you have a boyfriend who's informed about that stuff."

I spend the rest of the steamy ride trying to figure that one out. As we pull up at the Departing Flights curb, Sidney consults his wristwatch and says, "Fast." The cab putters off and I look around for Christian, who must have been surprised when he came back to the hotel and found my message telling him we were heading back so soon. Check out, I said. Meet you at the Delta counter. I'd turned chicken—anybody could see that.

It's half night, finally, though there's still a ghostly sun above the trees. A little thing, my guessing Sidney, but my elation over it is big.

HOURS we've been waiting at this gate. I've skipped sleep. Our flight will be across the whole country of Canada. "You don't make me feel important," Christian says, slumped in his plastic scoop chair. I'm wondering, Does he want me to correct that? Now?

"We'll need doughnuts," he says, and I don't ask or argue. His shoulders are sagging as he drifts on down the concourse. In the mint lighting it all looks like colorized film there. He should lighten up. None of this is about him.

I get up and leave his plane ticket on top of his Jimi Hendrix magazine, but hidden under his cap, where he'll find it. He can sell the ticket or use it and leave. He has my number at home.

Beside the luggage lockers is a postal machine. I buy all the Mary Cassatt stamps it'll put out. Some Raoul Wallenbergs. The red Georgia O'Keeffe. My, what a pretty stamp. I feed in bill after bill on those. I'm going to be up here for a bit, not flying anywhere.

She should be afraid of a lot of people, but not afraid of me. It's like I can hear my parents calling, my mom saying, "Get up, honey. You've been asleep for a while. Honey. Honey bunch. You want to get up." ♦

(Advt.)

The mystery of exotic lands and cultures holds a powerful appeal—even for those content to do their exploring in the pages of a book. **Elizabeth Peters** has successfully capitalized on this widespread fascination with her popular series of mysteries featuring Victorian archaeologist Amelia Peabody, who specializes in unearthing dastardly plots buried among the bones of the Pharaohs in turn-of-the-century Egypt. Her latest, ***THE APE WHO GUARDS THE BALANCE***, concerns an ancient papyrus that may have been illegally purloined by tomb robbers—the acquisition of which places the indomitable Amelia and her cohorts at the mercy of both a craven killer and vengeful Egyptian gods. This is an adventure into antiquity, rich in style, atmosphere and wit, that captivates the reader with its twists and surprises, and with secrets hidden in the shifting desert sands.

ELIZABETH PETERS
THE APE WHO GUARDS THE BALANCE

The American Southwest is **James D. Doss**' milieu, and his critically acclaimed mysteries—featuring small-town Police Chief Scott Parris, tribal policeman Charlie Moon, and elderly Ute shaman Daisy Perika—seamlessly blend modern-day crime detection with Native American mysticism. In ***THE SHAMAN'S GAME***, Charlie Moon is determined to hunt down the all-too-human assassin behind a rash of bizarre deaths connected to the annual sacred Sun Dance, despite his Aunt Daisy's contention that demonic powers are at work. And in Doss' ***THE SHAMAN'S BONES***, Parris and Moon join forces to investigate the ritualistic slaying of a young wife and mother, guided by Daisy Perika's chillingly prescient visions of raining blood and supernatural evil.

JAMES D. DOSS
A MYSTERY
THE SHAMAN'S GAME
THE SHAMAN'S BONES

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THE ORGAN GRINDERS
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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE UNFORGIVEN

Why the Wagner problem won't go away.

BY ALEX ROSS

A FEW months ago, I had lunch with Wagner. We met at an Italian restaurant in lower Manhattan. The conversation was engaging, in a high-strung, German sort of way. Nevertheless, I found myself distracted. I kept studying the man's face: his nose, which jutted out with beakish force; his eyebrows, which arched precipitately over the eyes; his chin, which was wide and peculiarly solid; and, most of all, his eyes, which were clear and bright and fixing. I seemed to be looking at the face of Richard Wagner, the most dangerous artist of the nineteenth century. It was, in fact, the face of Gottfried Wagner, the composer's fifty-one-year-old great-grandson. He was in town to talk to his publisher about a memoir he has written, "Twilight of the Wagners," whose American edition will appear next year.

It's a strange kind of autobiography—a quarrel with an ancestor who has been dead since 1883. Gottfried, a musicologist who wrote his dissertation on Kurt Weill, views his great-grandfather as a prophet of Nazism and as an unambiguously political composer. He attacks his grandmother Winifred for befriending Hitler, and he attacks his own father—Wolfgang, the current director of the Wagner festival in Bayreuth—for concealing the family's dismal history. He writes that the festival and the city at large have been infiltrated by neo-Nazi elements, with skinheads demonstrating nearby in sympathy. He writes that James Levine and Daniel Barenboim are hypocrites for conducting in Bayreuth in spite of their Jewishness. As a result of his agitations, he is no longer welcome at the festival. Last year, the war over Bayreuth filled columns in European newspapers. Things may be no different at this summer's festival, which runs until August 28th. In addition to performances of "Die Meistersinger," "The Flying Dutchman," the "Ring," and "Parsifal," there will be a symposium on Wagner and the Jews.

Gottfried is not clinically insane, as one Wagnerite has suggested, but he is plainly in the grip of an obsession. "I, Gottfried, am saying farewell," he told me. "I will not go on with this permanent discussion of Wagner." Yet go on he does. There is a grim irony in his jeremiad: Although he attacks the cult of heredity and racial purity, he defines himself by the blood flowing in his veins. Indeed, he represents himself as a redeemed and purified member of the brood. Wagner is the perfect labyrinth, from which there is no escape.

A similar tension grips the other modern Wagner controversy—the unofficial ban on Richard Wagner's music in Israel. The Israeli parliament held hearings on the issue in June, and a related symposium at the New Israeli Opera, whose music director is campaigning against the ban, was disrupted by shouts from the audience. Since Israeli orchestras a few years ago began playing the music of Richard Strauss for the first time since the founding of the state, it is now only Wagner—the Unforgiven—who has an asterisk next to his name. The irony is that the Israeli ban seems to follow the same logic as Wagner's own edicts on Jewish music. The scholar Thomas Grey has put it this way: "If we dismiss Wagner's diagnosis of 'Jewishness' in music as the bigoted drivel it seems to be, how do we go about ascertaining anti-Semitic traces in his music?"

Anti-Semitic or not, Wagner's operas are once again in ascendance. For the first time in more than a decade, there are voices strong enough to put his heroic roles across. This month, the Seattle Opera is presenting a new production of "Tristan und Isolde," with two of the best younger Wagner singers, Ben Heppner and Jane Eaglen, as the doomed lovers. In the 1999-2000 season, the Metropolitan Opera will use the same singers in its first revival of "Tristan" in fifteen years. Leading conductors still make Wagner a pillar of their careers, and most of them are not troubled by the anti-Semitic question. Levine and Barenboim, who conduct every summer at Bayreuth, have firmly set it aside. They have every right to do so: musicianship comes from devotion, not deconstruction. But listeners can have a more ambiguous relationship with the sound offered them. We can sympathize with Stéphane Mallarmé, who hailed "*le dieu Richard Wagner*," and, at the same time, we can understand W. H. Auden's description of Wagner as "an absolute shit."

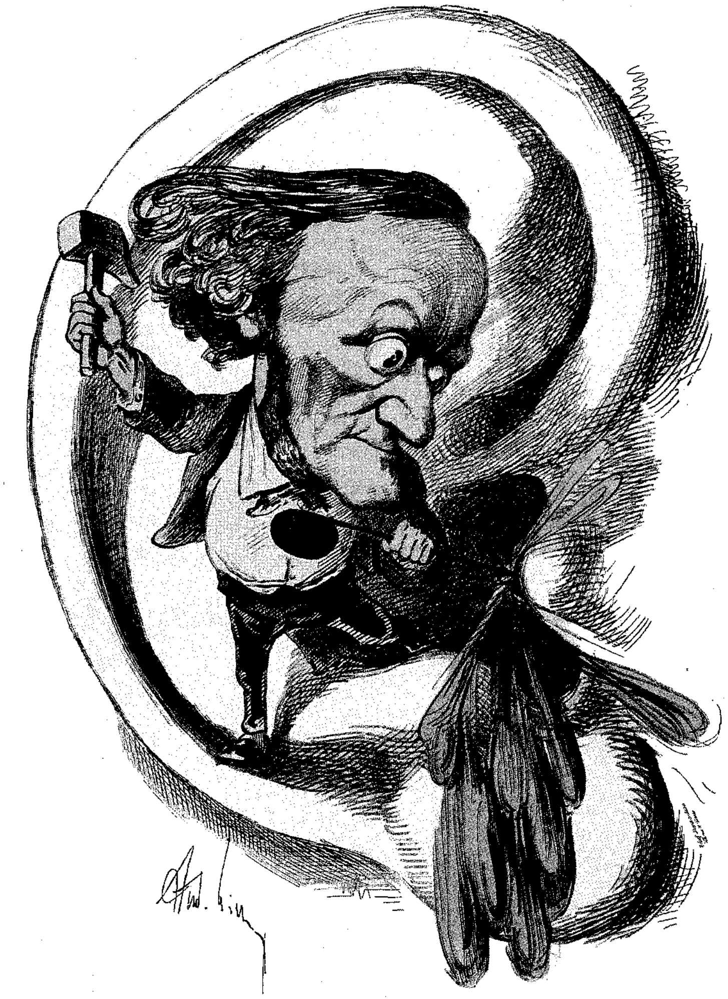
LOYAL Wagnerites argue that the Wagner Case, as Nietzsche called it, is a matter of false association. The music—with its visceral strength, its power of hypnosis, its trajectory from destruction to transformation to redemption—can serve as a soundtrack to almost any idea one cares to impose on it. Feminists, democrats, Fascists, and sadists have taken heart from it. The operas are gloriously schizophrenic: they trumpet tales from Germanic mythology, and also relate subtle narratives of bourgeois decline. They are filigreed with hesitations, regrets, resentments, and betrayals worthy of the later Henry James. (The "Ring" can be read as the story of an aristocrat who grows bored in a loveless marriage and builds a palace he cannot afford. He cuts corners, and the world ends.) If you include the sixteen volumes of Wagner's writings, the ten thousand items of his correspondence, and the innumerable gaseous pronouncements preserved in the diaries of his devoted second wife, Cosima, you have a classic playground for paranoiacs. Wagner is the Dealey Plaza of the nineteenth century: the excess of data can be rearranged to match every theory under the sun.

Will the Wagner Case ever be wrapped up? The problem is that Wagner put the power of his music behind his theories, and attention was paid. Any artist can bat around stupid prejudices; almost none can consistently smack them outside the ballpark of culture and into the streets of history. Should an artist be punished because he happened to fascinate a lunatic who was born six years after he died? No—but it's not enough merely to acknowledge that Hitler was an enthusiast of Wagner. The relationship between the two men had an uncanny aspect: Hitler saw himself as Wagner's servant, disciple, executor. Because Hitler scholars have not taken music seriously as a social realm, or even checked basic musical sources, the full story of Hitler's obsession with Wagner has not been told. My encounter with Gottfried Wagner inspired me to do some digging in the New York Public Library. While reading back and forth in the collected writings and sayings of Hitler and Wagner, I had a clammy sense of family resemblance.

WAGNER had the grandest, craziest kind of nineteenth-century life. It is divided, like one of his librettos, into three perfectly balanced acts. 1813-42: Drunken-wastrel years; early struggles; down and out in Paris. Then success in Dresden with the disorganized grand opera "Rienzi."

1842-64: Increasing difficulties as opera director in Dresden; initial public bewilderment over the breakthrough music dramas "The Flying Dutchman," "Tannhäuser," and "Lohengrin"; dabblings in proletarian politics. Total disaster during the revolution of 1848: he consorts with Bakunin, is pursued by police, and flees to Switzerland. His marriage disintegrates amid hopeless "Tristan und Isolde" affairs. Somehow, in this insane time he begins "Der Ring des Nibelungen," the largest work of art in history.

1864-83: At a moment of financial catastrophe, the young King Ludwig II of Bavaria saves him from prison and offers a masochistically selfless friendship. "Tristan und Isolde" opens the floodgates of the mature Wagner sound; "Die Meistersinger" demolishes his least favorite critic, Eduard Hanslick. The Wagner festival opens in Bayreuth with the première of the four-day "Ring." In the mansion of his old age, in the company of Cosima, the daughter of Liszt, he labors over the mystery of "Parsifal." He goes to Venice and dies. His last statement is a racist pamphlet.



Wagner wrote of his "enormous desire to commit acts of artistic terrorism"; Hitler was among those inspired by the violence of his music.

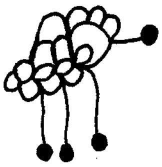
BIBLIOTHEQUE DES ARTS DECORATIFS/JEAN-LOUP CHARMET

The story can be told at delightful length, as it is in Ernest Newman's four-volume biography and in Wagner's bombastic, deceitful, snakily charming memoirs. Yet the melodrama of the career pales beside the interior vastness of Wagner's creative life. He was, for himself, a landscape in which he could roam at will: he could stare up at the mountains of his intellect and descend into the valleys of his resentment. His egoism was not of the boasting, "I am the greatest" kind. Rather, it consisted in a proliferation of selves. Where another man might consider the relationship of himself to the world, Wagner considered the relationships of his various selves to one another: Am I a poet or a composer? Am I a visionary or a prophet of doom? Am I a bourgeois sentimentalist or a social revolutionary? There was a Charlie Rose in his head whose topic every night was Wagner. The most important of these dialogues was the one between the poet and the composer. Wagner could, in fact, claim equal originality in the two pursuits. It was the force of his literary imagination that gave his operas their epic breadth and psychological shading. And it was the violence of his polemical style that made him a factor in the history of hate.

Wagner was relentless. He could be accused of most of the deadly sins, but not of sloth. Max Nordau, the author of the turn-of-the-century best-seller "Degeneration," correctly diagnosed his condition as that of a "graphomaniac"—a person who displayed a "stubborn perseverance in one and the same fundamental idea." This explains the technique of the leitmotiv; it also explains the extreme redundancy of the prose writings, their crazed intensification of language. (On one page of an essay on Beethoven, the word "annihilation" appears five times.) Wagner's energy was often manifested as sheer sonic violence. His orchestra is overwhelming not just in volume but in the thrumming density of the texture in all registers, and especially the bass. He also knew when the ear had had enough: he made sudden gifts of quiet and tenderness. Act III of "Die Walküre" begins with the Ride of the Valkyries and ends with Wotan's heart-stopping farewell to the unruly Brünnhilde, whom he has consigned to a flame-ringed rock. For a few precious minutes, the music settles into a lullaby of murmuring violas and cellos, an oasis in the wasteland of Wotan's rage. Wagner keeps working the dialectic of brutality and compassion, and another turn of the screw always awaits. "Die Walküre" ends with the white noise of the Magic Fire.

Wagner began as a writer of bland Beethovenian overtures and intermittently lively Romantic operas. He formed strong ideas but failed to develop them. He was too protective of his inspirations to send them through the intellectual hazing process that a classical development entails. In his overture to "Rienzi" he presents one splendid theme and admires it from all angles: it sits there like a diamond on velvet. Aware of the weakness of his structures, Wagner decided that the genre, not he himself, must change. If he could not write a Beethovenian symphony, the symphony was defunct. If he could not write grand opera, grand opera must be destroyed. Opera would mutate into a new genre—"music drama"—into which the dying genes of the symphony could be spliced. The fact that other composers were still composing symphonies did not faze him. Musical culture, he insisted, had grown stale and meretricious. Either it tried to gull the public with a mishmash of styles or it retreated into pretentious re-creations of the past. It happened that there were two composers who typified those tendencies. Meyerbeer was the master of grand opera, moving from success to success as Wagner's efforts failed to gain ground. Mendelssohn was the leader of the "historical" wing—and a conductor to whom Wagner had submitted his Symphony in C. Both men were friendly toward him, if not hugely enthusiastic. Both were Jewish.

In 1848, as Europe was convulsed in revolution, Wagner exploded. His decision to join a Dresden uprising in early 1849 seemed less a gesture of solidarity with the masses than an act of self-destruction. In exile in Zurich, he abandoned any attempt to ingratiate himself with the musical establishments of Europe. He gave up, for a time, writing music; instead, he threw himself into a campaign of verbal bombast and abuse. "I have an enormous desire to commit acts of artistic terrorism," he wrote to his new ally, Franz Liszt. To his friend Theodor Uhlig he wrote, "Works of art cannot be created at present, they can only be prepared for by means of revolutionary activity, by destroying and crushing everything that is worth destroying and crushing." By "revolutionary activity" Wagner meant aesthetics, not politics. Later, he believed, the new aesthetics would somehow create a new politics.



His major essays—"Art and Revolution," "The Art-Work of the Future," "Opera and Drama," and "Judaism in Music"—were an innovative mixture of theory and thuggery. Much of their rhetoric came from the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, who called for a transformation of Christianity into a religion of nature, selfless love, and "pure humanity." Feuerbach protested what he called "absolute," "egoistic" ideologies. Wagner saw a similarity between the cold, loveless Judeo-Christian religion described by Feuerbach and the cold, lifeless musical genres with which he had had scant success. Once again, a growing obsession with the Jews lurked underneath: Feuerbach considered the idea of the "absolute" a Jewish invention. Above all, he condemned the concept of the all-powerful Jehovah, who brings about the "creation out of nothing." Such views influenced the text, and possibly even the music, of the "Ring." The prelude to "Das Rheingold"—a hundred and thirty-six bars of E-flat major, rising from nearly inaudible bass tones—depicts a world that has always existed and is gradually coming into view. It is the opposite of the "creation out of nothing," which, Feuerbach wrote, "had its origin only in the unfathomable depth of Hebrew egoism."

Wagner's anti-Semitism was, in outline, typical of his time and place. It was, however, uncommonly personal and intense. Wagner scholars used to segregate the 1850 article "Judaism in Music" from the other essays, explaining that it was a momentary, regret-

A BALLAD THAT WE DO NOT PERISH

Those who sailed at dawn
but will never return
left their trace on a wave—

a shell fell to the bottom of the sea
beautiful as lips turned to stone

those who walked on a sandy road
but could not reach the shuttered windows
though they already saw the roofs—

they have found shelter in a bell of air

but those who leave behind only
a room grown cold a few books
an empty inkwell white paper—

in truth they have not completely died
their whisper travels through thickets of wallpaper
their level head still lives in the ceiling

their paradise was made of air
of water lime and earth an angel of wind
will pulverize the body in its hand
they will be
carried over the meadows of this world

—Zbigniew Herbert
(1924-98)

(*Translated, from the Polish, by John and Bogdana Carpenter.*)

table outburst of choler. All the essays, however, are filled with coded language about the Jews, to which Feuerbach provides the key. For example, in hailing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Wagner refers contemptuously to those egoistically absolute musicians who will be crushed by the work's power. Switching to the second person, he speaks man to man:

> Do what you will: look away from Beethoven, fumble after Mozart, gird yourself round with Johann Sebastian Bach; write symphonies with or without choruses, write masses, oratorios—sexless opera-embryos!—make songs without words, operas without texts! . . . We look without fear toward that great annihilating blow of destiny which will make an end of this whole unwieldy monstrosity of music, clearing space for the Artwork of the Future.

The particular monstrosity he has in mind is Mendelssohn, who revived Bach's "St. Matthew Passion," who wrote the "Songs Without Words," and who, at the time of Wagner's writing, was dead. Wagner was beginning to fight an Eternal Jew—a figure who might be dead in one place but was alive in another. If it wasn't Mendelssohn in Leipzig, it was Meyerbeer in Paris or, later, the critic Hanslick in Vienna.

Did such a Jew appear in mythological disguise in the libretto and music of the "Ring"? Here we get into the most controversial area of Wagner studies: the search for musical anti-Semitism. The focus of attention is Alberich, the ruler of the Nibelung dwarfs and the forger of the enviable Ring. The scholar Marc Weiner has argued that Alberich's quarrelsome, rhythmically irregular style matches various points in Wagner's critique of the musical habits of the Jews. Is this so? It's a matter of deciding between intention and execution. At first, the dwarfs did seem to be metaphors for Jews. In the 1848 prose sketch for the "Ring," Wagner says of the Nibelungs, "They burrow with restless, unsettled activity (like worms in a dead body) through the intestines of the earth." Two years later, in "Judaism in Music," he calls the Jews a "swarming colony of worms in the dead body of art."

As Wagner got deeper into the "Ring," however, his conception of the dwarfs seemed to change. Alberich may be an agent of decline, but he also behaves with admirable consistency, even with a perverse kind of rectitude: according to legend, the Ring belongs to the one who forswears love, and Alberich alone makes that sacrifice. The loyalty of the Nibelungs is emphasized most in "Götterdämmerung," as Alberich schemes with his half-human son, Hagen. In the quietly awesome first scene of Act II, Alberich urges Hagen, "Be true! Be true!" Hagen is nothing if not true. Reaching for the Ring at the end of the opera, he plunges to destruction. In an early sketch, Wagner even imagined Alberich as the last figure seen onstage before the curtain falls: "He sinks, with gestures of despair." The whole cycle might be read as Alberich's tragedy.

Did Wagner harbor a secret sympathy for the Jews? The critic Joseph Horowitz suggests as much in a paper he is delivering at the symposium in Bayreuth. He calls Wagner "a master portraitist of marginality" and argues that the dwarfs are an exaggerated but not mean-spirited portrait of ghetto Jews. Perhaps, but it may also be that a growing regard for the Nibelungs led Wagner to abandon his putative Jewish allegory. Alberich and kin may have been too good, too true, to be Jewish. In his last years, Wagner told Cosima that the dwarfs were really Mongols.

The same ambiguities crop up in "Die Meistersinger," that almost humane comedy set among the Mastersingers of sixteenth-century Nuremberg. Beckmesser, the villain of the piece, is a cartoon of Eduard Hanslick, the Viennese critic who attacked Wagner as an arrogant radical and who advocated the conservative aesthetics of Brahms. The fact that Hanslick was of Jewish descent has fascinated some commentators. Barry Millington, for example, has argued that Beckmesser's grotesqueries mock not only Hanslick but also traits of Jewish singing as Wagner perceived them. But in two respects Beckmesser fails to match the Jewish stereotype. In the first place, wise old Hans Sachs indicates that Beckmesser can rejoin the community once he has got his comeuppance. If Beckmesser were Jewish, he could never be fully accepted. Second, Beckmesser

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makes a fool of himself in love—in spite of Wagner's notion that the Jews were fundamentally loveless. So Beckmesser, like Alberich, isn't quite nasty enough to be Jewish.

Perhaps the real aim in all this was not to hound Hanslick but to trap him. The critic saw a picture of himself brutalized onstage; at the same time, he heard bright, clear, almost Mendelssohnian music that appealed to his sensibilities. Hanslick's first reaction to "Die Meistersinger" was negative, but he later revised his opinion and declared it his favorite among the Wagner operas. He also felt the need to deny that he was a Jew. Wagner's victory was complete. Over and over, in such cases, he was crafty beyond measure. He was conscious that many Jews admired his music, and that some of them helped to sustain his gaudy life style. Under pressure, he always backed off a bit from his most extreme positions. And he gave his doubters one unimpeachable, apolitical masterpiece—"Tristan und Isolde"—in which Feuerbach's incendiary philosophy gave way to the world-weariness of Schopenhauer, in which love and death conquered all, and in which music ran riot over language.

All the same, he leaned in his last years toward overtly political art. In "Parsifal" he started to take down the magic shield of ambiguity which had prevented his most noisome notions from running amok. Here the racial science that he had lately been devouring showed in the dialogue and in the stage directions. For example, theorists had sorted the races into "Aryan" and "Semitic" categories, including among the latter both the Jews and the Arabs. Wagner, in the "Parsifal" libretto, gave Arab and Jewish associations to the degenerates of the piece. We are told in the dramatis personae that the evil magician Klingsor has a castle "facing the Arab part of Spain." Kundry, Klingsor's unwilling accomplice in the seduction and corruption of the Knights of the Grail, is identified as a traveller in Arabia and is described as "reddish-brown-skinned." At the same time, she is a female counterpart of the Wandering Jew: she has been wandering the earth in search of redemption ever since she laughed at Christ on the way to Golgotha. She is a composite Semite, who must be kept at bay, and her redemption is death. "Parsifal" is a White Mass, a ceremony of purification. Hitler knew it well.

At the turn of the century, many young men were spellbound by Wagner. The allure was musical: Wagner's harmony was built on suspension, evasion, anticipation. Each hovering "Tristan" chord—the four-note "half-diminished" chord that appears throughout the operas, from "Rienzi" to "Parsifal"—exemplified the mood: it could resolve in various directions, and it was also curiously stable and self-contained. Each chord seemed to say, "Watch and wait." Or, "The time is nigh." Or, "You are the one." German writers chronicled the heady experience of the Wagner spell. Thomas Mann saw it as both a thrill and a threat. In his novels he imitated the slow, hypnotic heave of the music, but at the same time he criticized the state of mind that forgot itself in the flow, that lost itself in dangerous fantasies. Arthur Schnitzler took up the same theme in his 1908 novel, "The Way Into the Open." Here is his portrait of a young man, a would-be opera composer and director, falling under the spell of "Tristan und Isolde" at the Vienna Court Opera:

> The lights were dimmed, the prelude to the third act began. Georg heard languid ocean waves breaking on a desolate coast and the mournful sighs of a fatally wounded hero vanishing in bluish-thin air. . . . His hopes ran farther and higher. Perhaps only a couple of years would pass—and harmonies he himself had discovered would sound through a wide and festive space; and the audience would listen with rapture. . . . Did he know, then, whether he was given the power to hold men through his art, like the master who was heard here today? To be victorious over the petty considerations and bereavements of everyday life?

This fictional picture has a real-life parallel that is, to say the least, eerie. On May 8, 1906, Adolf Hitler witnessed the same production of "Tristan und Isolde" at the Vienna Court Opera. He was seventeen years old. He was a painter, he dreamed of becoming an opera director, he made amateurish efforts at Wagnerian composition. He wrote a postcard home in a state of obvious excitement: "Today 7:30-12 Tristan." On another postcard he wrote, "Powerful waves of tone flood the

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POSTSCRIPT

MOVING MAN

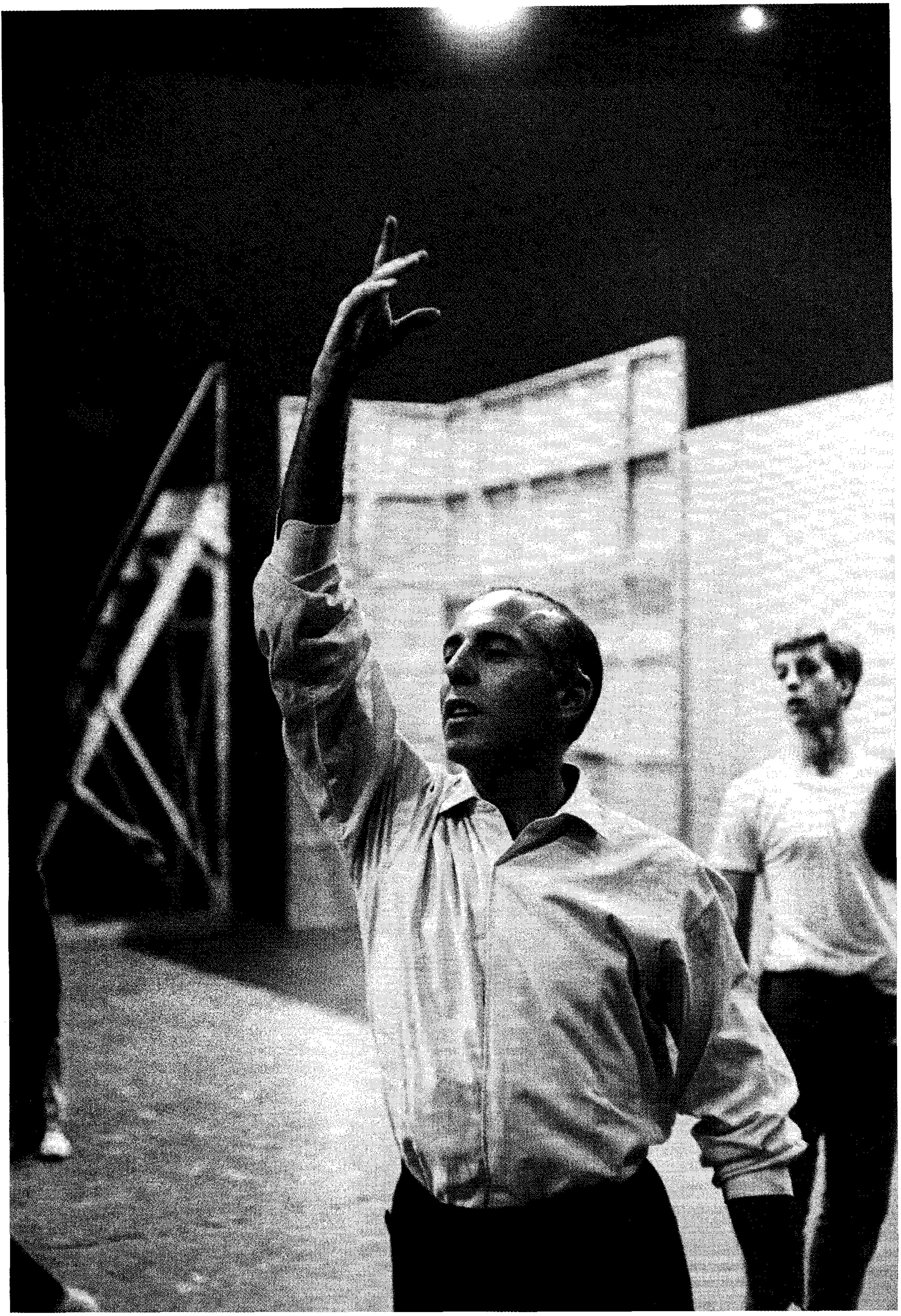
Jerome Robbins did not have a show-business childhood, as his most characteristic work might lead you to think. He died last week in New York, where he was born in 1918, and where his father ran a delicatessen. He went to public schools in Weehawken, and took a year at N.Y.U. even though he'd already landed in the modern-dance class that changed his life. He had a glorious apprenticeship on Broadway at a time when dance was coming in big; his two great masters were George Abbott and George Balanchine. But Robbins was entirely self-made: precocious, audacious, insuperably ambitious, he typified the make-way-for-youth spirit of the era.

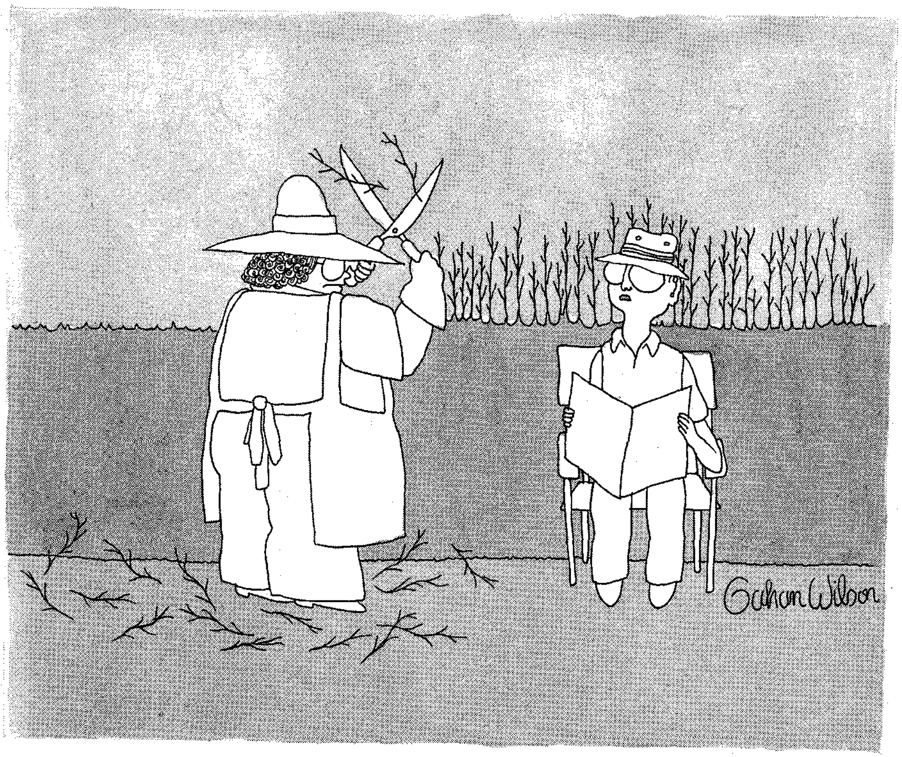
Robbins took his cues from the culture, which led many observers to think he had a special grasp of American attitudes, particularly those of minorities and kids. Whatever Robbins had a grasp of, he got hold of it mainly through dance; the rest was advertising. His jazz dances had nothing to do with Harlem; still, they were jazz, and hermetic jazz at that. His use of teen-agers had nothing to do with sociology; the teen-agers Robbins knew were all dancers.

Within the ballet culture, Robbins operated with total security and a consciously alien eye: a modern dancer looking at Renaissance manners, a Broadway baby looking at class, a Jew from Weehawken looking at Paris and Petersburg. In "Afternoon of a Faun" he made ballet the language of adolescence—articulate and yet uncultivated, an irresolute mixture of feeling and form. In general, it was this very personal betwixt-and-between way of handling the classical vocabulary that gave Robbins his highly identifiable, highly watchable style. Nothing bolder or more delicate exists in his repertory than the opening of "Moves," in which a line of dancers faces the audience in silence. Suddenly, out of this blankness, everybody pliés and extends a foot tendu front. Just as "In shimmered Jeeves with the steaming" says Wodehouse, those pointed feet say Robbins, and nobody else. —Arlene Croce

Photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson

MAGNUM





"Hold it right there."

• •

room, and the murmur of the wind gives way to a terrible roaring frenzy of sound."

It is common knowledge that Hitler was fascinated by Wagner's music. There is, however, more to the story than can be found in the Hitler literature. His first trip to Vienna, in 1906, hardly rates a mention in the standard biographies, and yet its influence on such a vague young mind must have been profound. Anyone who knows the Viennese musical scene of that period has to be curious for more detail. For example, who was the conductor for that May 8th performance of "Tristan"? Brigitte Hamann, a scholar who has written the authoritative study of Hitler's early years in Vienna, states that the name of the conductor cannot be found. She apparently did not bother to ask the Vienna Opera. The company informed me that the conductor was Gustav Mahler. Therefore, Hitler saw in front of him, on one of his first nights in Vienna, the charismatic Jewish emperor of musical Vienna. This lends credence to a surprising claim by Hitler's boyhood friend August Kubizek to the effect that Hitler had "the greatest admiration" for Mahler in his youth. Kubizek also tells us that Hitler's veneration of Wagner was so fierce that he committed to memory large portions of Wagner's famously turgid prose.

Hitler made a telling reference, later in life, to his early visits to the Vienna Opera. Hans Frank, the Nazi Party lawyer and later Governor-General of Poland, recorded the following late-night monologue:

> The record-player was pulled out and the Führer picked out some records. First the "Parsifal" Prelude, conducted by Muck in Bayreuth. . . . In our lonely silence there sounded the sacred tones of the last work of Richard Wagner, his Master. As they died away, he said pensively: "Out of 'Parsifal' I am building my religion—the solemnity of the Mass without theological party-bickering. With a brotherly bass-note of true love, without theatrical humility and empty formal babbling. . . ." Then we heard the Funeral March from "Götterdämmerung," this indescribably splendid music, the most grandiose that Wagner composed. "I first heard it in Vienna. In the Opera. And I still remember, as if it were just today, how completely agitated I was when I had to walk past some yammering Jews in caftans on my way home. It's impossible to think of a more irreconcilable combination. This glorious mystery of the dying hero and this Jewish filth!"

The spectral ghetto Jew also appears in "Mein Kampf." Hitler says he encountered him during a long walk, recoiled in disgust, and asked himself, "Is this a German?" It was at that moment, he says, that deep hatred of the Jews first welled up in him. Given that "Jews in caftans" seem to wander from one context to another in Hitler's memory, we have to wonder whether any such figures existed. Were they a distorted reflection of the Jews who thronged musical Vienna? It is certainly strange that Hitler should have seen the greatest Jewish musician of the age one night in Vienna and on another night been disgusted by Jews outside the theatre.

Hitler's monologue suggests something else: that he knew how to speak the Wagnerian dialect. Gottfried Wagner, the anti-Wagner, speculates that "Mein Kampf" was consciously Wagnerian in style. To test that idea, I prepared a list of Wagner buzzwords and went searching for them in the pages of "Mein Kampf." (My task was made easier by a neo-Nazi Web site, from which I downloaded the text of Hitler's book; I could then use the search function on my computer to look for clusters of Wagnerese.) Wagnerisms do occur from time to time. For example, Hitler does not fail to make use of the unlovely word that Wagner invented: *Verjudung*, Jewification. He speaks of "the inner Jewification of our people." He also speaks of "egoism" and "selfishness" as traits that pure Aryans reject. Wagner condemns the same in "The Art-Work of the Future," writing, "Only when the ruling religion of egoism . . . is pulled up root and branch can *the new religion* step forth." "The Jew," Hitler says, "never possessed a culture of his own." Wagner says, "The Jew never had an art of his own." Granted, such phrases circulate throughout anti-Semitic literature and cannot be traced back definitively to Wagner. However, it is likely that Hitler first encountered them in his youthful study of Wagner's writings.

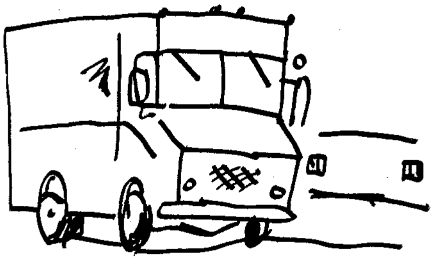
There is another link between Wagner and "Mein Kampf": the book was written on paper that had been supplied by Wagner's daughter-in-law Winifred. The Wagners and their in-laws had been marching toward Hitlerism for some time, and Winifred became the most respectable of Hitler's early supporters. Wagner's magazine, the *Bayreuther Blätter*, had already published an incredible barrage of Aryan and anti-Semitic propaganda. The Wagner loyalists like to suppose that the *Bayreuther Blätter* movement was an aberration that appeared only after the composer's death, but there is little difference between the articles that were published during his lifetime and those that came after it. Wagner alone made Bayreuth a magnet for iffy minds. It was inevitable that Hitler would show up there. He did, in 1923, and Winifred at once perceived in him "the saviour of Germany." The young Munich rabble-rouser decked himself in the trappings of the Bayreuth ideology, which included vegetarianism, agitation for animal rights, campaigns against vivisection, and bits of Buddhism and Indian lore. And he began doting on the youngest Wagners, in a grandfatherly way. "Sometimes, Hitler's car crept up the drive after midnight," Friedelind Wagner recalled in her memoirs. "Late as it was, he never failed to come into the nursery and tell us gruesome tales of his adventures."

"Parsifal" was the Wagner opera that Hitler found most inspiring. In the *Bayreuther Blätter*, Wagner had hinted—and let others state outright—that the piece was the saga of an Aryan Christ: the Knights of the Grail are a racial élite suffering from degeneration, and Amfortas, their king, has a mysterious wound that was brought on by the impure kiss of Kundry. Amfortas says that his blood is "sinful"—tainted. Hitler echoed that language dutifully. He once said, "We must interpret 'Parsifal' in a totally different way. . . . The king is suffering from the incurable ailment of corrupted blood." He then hummed the famous motif of "Knowing through compassion." And when Hitler spoke of the intermixing of the races in "Mein Kampf" he called it a "sin"—not a word he was given to using very often.

Hitler's most momentous allusion to "Parsifal" came in three speeches he delivered between 1939 and 1942—speeches in which he reported on the progress of the Final Solution in a curious code. The key to the code is a strange scene at the center of the opera. Kundry is explaining to Parsifal the origin of her curse, her mockery of Christ: "I saw Him—Him / and—laughed / And he glanced at me," she remembers, haltingly. Three funereal trombones intone chords of B major, but they are hedged in by strangulated repetitions of the screaming chord of Amfortas's wound. The harmony keeps dribbling away into disconnected tendrils of notes. There is an atmosphere of damp, chilly menace. This is the sound of Golgotha: "The Saviour on the cross, blood everywhere," Wagner told Cosima. Blood is the image that fits the music: it seeps and drips. Above, in the winds, there is a weak, stuttering kind of laughter.

In January of 1939, in a speech to the Reichstag, Hitler said, "Very often in my life have I been a prophet, and have generally been laughed at. . . . I believe that the Jews of Germany are now choking on their formerly resounding laughter." He added that he would make another prophecy: if the Jews were to plunge the world into war, the result would be the "annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." Then, in September of 1942, Hitler said, "The Jews once laughed at my prophecies, even in Germany. I do not know if they are still laughing today, or if their laughter has not already subsided. I can only affirm now: their laughter will everywhere subside." And in November of that year he said, "I have always been mocked as a prophet. Of those who formerly laughed, there are countless numbers who are no longer laughing today, and those who are still laughing now may not do it for much longer."

This horrible leitmotiv of Jewish laughter—which appears as the ultimate Hitler enigma in Ron Rosenbaum's new book, "Explaining Hitler"—seems to come out of "Parsifal," and not just out of the scene of Christ bleeding. Later, during the Good Friday Spell, the knight-messiah looks out over a blossoming meadow, thinking of the flower maidens who tempted him and of Kundry, who is now prostrate before him. "I saw them wither," he murmurs, "those who once laughed at me."



WAGNER'S angriest modern critics have suggested that he would have approved of Nazi Germany if he had lived to see it. His angriest defenders answer that he would have been horrified by the uses to which his music was put. The argument is a foolish one: Wagner was a man of the nineteenth century, Hitler a man of the twentieth. Wagner could not have pictured the world that Hitler lived in, much less Hitler himself. Still, it has to be noticed that Hitler developed crucial parts of his philosophy not by distorting Wagner but by taking his words literally. Hitler was the ultimate, if not the perfect, Wagnerite. The most disturbing resemblance between the two men has to do not with content but with style—the relentlessness, the monomania, the manipulation of reality in the service of one idea, the blend of mysticism and hate. And in both men hate only grew with the years. Some members of Wagner's generation who had been brutally anti-Semitic in their youth muted their rhetoric, or even became apologetically pro-Jewish, in later years; the novelists Karl Gutzkow and Heinrich Laube are two examples. Wagner never relented. Even his much lauded friendships with individual Jews were suspect: they had a sadomasochistic element. The pianist Joseph Rubinstein, for example, approached Wagner and asked for salvation from his Jewishness.

Did Wagner's hatred somehow drive his genius? You could see in him the same twisted outlook that Anthony Julius has detected in T. S. Eliot: the reliance on anti-Semitism as a "muse," as a gruesome guide to poetic truths. Wagner wrote to Liszt that his hatred of the Jews was "as necessary to my nature as gall is to the blood." He also spoke of "*hatred* as pure passion." In the "Ring," Brünnhilde finds "redemption through love." Can one also find redemption through hate? This may be the import of the great scene in "Götterdämmerung" that is given over to the nighttime scheming of Alberich and Hagen. "Hate the happy," Alberich says as the orchestra plays lush "Tristan" chords in sequence.

The same passion for darkness periodically overtakes the restorative pageant of "Parsifal." At the end of the

Good Friday Spell, after Parsifal's judgment on "those who once laughed at me," the cool melody of spring drifts into another quivering "Tristan" chord, and the bells of Monsalvat—the castle of the Grail—suddenly boom in the bass. Wagner took great trouble in the casting of these giant bells, but he did an odd thing: he set them in the key of C, which is not the main key of the opera. At this moment, the bells create a disturbing dissonance—another twinge of the chord of Amfortas's wound. As the sickly knights file past, the music is repeatedly convulsed by lurches across the tritone, like a grinding of musical tectonic plates. As so often in Wagner, light and dark are fused: emblems of holiness have become terrifying. Even as Parsifal redeems mankind with his spear, there is a sense that the whole thing could come crashing down.

In the end, it may be Wagner's doleful egoism that frees him from the seemingly unbreakable connection to Hitler. His hatred is utterly self-involved. It is a matter not of "us" versus "them" but of "me" versus "you." Hitler, by contrast, views himself as the servant of great abstractions; the Jewish enemy is too gigantic to be addressed face to face. Wagner's second-person attacks—such as "You must learn to die"—have a weird kind of graciousness. He may be a bully, but he is giving you the chance to talk back. Much great thought and art have arisen out of a talking back to Wagner: Nietzsche's brilliant rants in the last years of his sanity, Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande," Mann's "Doktor Faustus," even Joyce's "Ulysses." The Master's work carries an implicit challenge: if you do not like this Wagner, become your own. That sense of a challenge, rather than an attack, may explain the puzzling phenomenon of the Jewish cult of Wagner. There were some Jews who abased themselves before him and others who were emboldened by him. One of the latter was Theodor Herzl, who said that he began to dream of a Zionist state during a performance of "Tannhäuser."

In a perverse way, the catastrophes and upheavals that have followed in Wagner's wake are further testimony to his power of persuasion, his ability to shake the audience. But is it a good thing for art to change the world? Wagner's infinite ambitions have had a dubious—even destructive—influence on music itself. He was a monumentalist: he could build only giant structures, not habitable homes. Unlike all great composers before him, he wrote no chamber music, no entertainments, no throwaways for amateur violists and weekend flutists. In his urge to explain, connect, and unify the musical universe, he set a bad precedent for what Ned Rorem has termed "the masterpiece syndrome": dozens of imitators sought, consciously or unconsciously, to make Ultimate Statements, and in the process the intimate, conversational quality of nineteenth-century music-making broke down. The "Ring" was like a glorious modern cathedral built on the rubble of a village. Where would the congregation come from now? Not necessarily from humble German villages, it turned out. The Bayreuth Festival's mysterious ticketing system seems to favor C.E.O.s, influential foreigners, and unstoppable fanatics. The *Volk* have trouble getting in.

Monumentalism was what Eduard Hanslick denounced in Wagner. The powerful Viennese critic had his persnickety, Beckmesserish qualities, but he could also be strikingly wise. "Wagner's star will continue to shine in the German operatic firmament—as long as all around is darkness," Hanslick wrote. He also said, "Wagner's operatic style recognizes only superlatives, and a superlative has no future. It is the end, not the beginning. . . . He who follows will break his neck, and the public will contemplate the disaster with indifference." Hanslick foresaw the travails of classical music in the twentieth century—the futile chase after progressively more arcane and irrelevant musics of "the future." At the same time, he perceived Wagner's death wish for music: the attitude of "After me—or with me—the deluge." Wagner exhibited a purely aesthetic kind of intolerance, an inability to coexist with musical equals. What is Bayreuth but Wagner and darkness all around? In an odd way, Bayreuth may be the best argument for keeping the Israeli ban on Wagner in place, for keeping that asterisk next to his name. If there is a place where Wagner alone is allowed to be heard, there should also be a place where Wagner is asked to be silent. ♦

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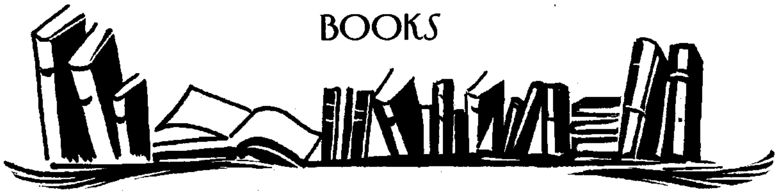


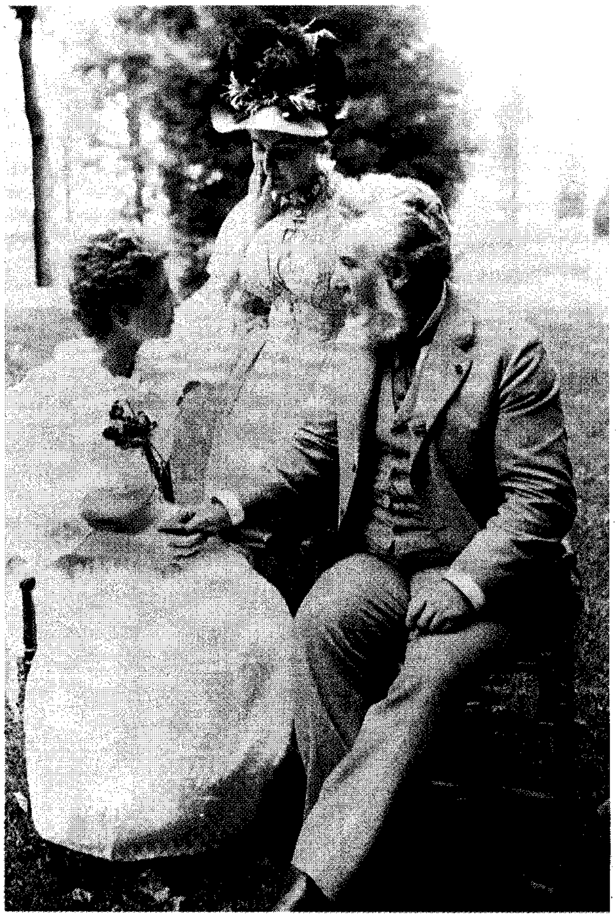
LARGE FOR HER YEARS

Beyond the silence and the darkness lay the sexuality of Helen Keller.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

HELEN KELLER seems an unlikely candidate for a contemporary biography. We distrust inspirational figures. We no longer idealize our celebrities; we search out their sins. Born in 1880, dead in 1968, Keller achieved celebrity as a child and stayed actively in the public eye until a stroke, in 1961, reduced her to invalidism. World-renowned in her time, acquainted with the great from Alexander Graham Bell to Golda Meir, this woman, both deaf and blind from the age of nineteen months, is remembered in countless Helen Keller jokes whose bad taste vents our deep fear of being reduced to her condition, a kind of burial alive. Locked in her silent dark, Keller conveyed a spiritual triumph whose terms would embarrass, perhaps, today's Americans. She spoke to a nation familiar with deprivation; with inscrutable onslaughts of childhood disease, such as had taken her two primary senses; and with vivid hopes of a better future, whether conceived in terms of the Christian Heaven or a Communist paradise. She, as it happened, was a devotee of both Christ and Marx, both a Swedenborgian and a radical socialist. Such faiths seem a stretch now, but insofar as they sustained her they communicated hope and courage to her audiences. Those audiences have vanished.

William Gibson's very successful play "The Miracle Worker"—a television play in 1957, a Broadway play for seven hundred performances beginning in 1959, and a movie in 1962—formed a handsome tribute to the central event of her life, her learning tactile sign language at the age of six at the hands of Annie Sullivan, a twenty-year-old governess Helen's parents had recently hired. Joseph Lash's massive and thorough 1980 biography, "Helen and Teacher: The Story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy," would seem to wrap up all that need be said about two remarkable women and their celebrated relationship. Nevertheless, Dorothy Herrmann, whose previous biographical subjects have been S. J. Perelman and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, has produced "Helen Keller: A Life" (Knopf; $30). The private woman is emphasized over the public figure, whom Helen herself began to create when she used her newfound literacy to address a letter to Alexander Graham Bell. By the age of eight, she was being promoted by Michael Anagnos, the director of Boston's Perkins Institution for the Blind, as "a phenomenon." He wrote, "As soon as a slight crevice was opened in the outer wall of their twofold imprisonment, her mental facilities emerged full-armed from their living tomb as Pallas Athene from the head of Zeus." Her goodness was as fabulous as her intellect. Bell wrote a colleague, "I feel that in this child I have seen more of the Divine than has been manifest in anyone I ever met before." By the age of ten, Helen was an accomplished fund-raiser for another deaf-blind child, Tommy Springer, writing letter after letter, in her careful square printing, on his behalf. Her myth was launched as—to quote the enthusiastic Anagnos, in 1889—"the queen of precocious and brilliant children . . . as pure as a lily of the valley, and as innocent and as joyous as the birds of the air or the lambs in the field."



Keller (left) with Sullivan and Alexander Graham Bell. She told him she thought of love as a flower "which I may not touch."

COURTESY HELEN KELLER INTERNATIONAL

Herrmann covers the ground more quickly than Lash, and a shade less reverently. A female writer in 1998 can speculate more frankly than Lash could in 1980 about Helen Keller as a sexual being. The sexual note is struck early, in Herrmann's introduction: "Beautiful, intelligent, high-strung and passionate, Helen might have lived the life of a spoiled, willful, and highly sexed southern belle had not the nature of her disability and her dependency on Annie Sullivan forced her into an entirely different existence." The six-year-old girl whom Annie Sullivan found at her parents' home in Tuscumbia, Alabama, was, she wrote to her friend and patroness Sophie Hopkins, "large, strong, and ruddy, and as unrestrained in her movements as a young colt. She has none of those nervous habits that are so noticeable and distressing in blind children." That was the thing about Helen Keller: she radiated vitality. Mrs. Keller told the newly arrived governess that the child had "not been ill a day since the illness"—called "brain fever," probably scarlet fever or meningitis—"that deprived her of her sight and hearing."

At the age of twelve, according to Anagnos, Helen was "5'2" in height and of symmetrical figure.... Her physique is magnificent." A few years later, Lawrence Hutton, one of a number of philanthropists who helped subsidize Helen through her life, wrote of their first meeting, in 1895:

> Physically she was large for her years, and more fully developed than is the every-day girl of her age. Her face was almost beautiful, and her expression charming to behold, in its varying changes, which were always bright.... She was peculiarly affectionate and demonstrative in her disposition. And she bestowed her innocent kisses upon persons of all ages and of either sex as freely and as guilelessly as the ordinary girl of fifteen would bestow a harmless innocent smile.

In "The World I Live In" (1908), her introspective account of her deaf-blind life, Helen wrote, in a section on smells:

> Masculine exhalations are, as a rule stronger, more vivid, more widely differentiated than those of women. In the odor of young men there is something elemental, as of fire, storm, and salt sea. It pulsates with buoyancy and desire. It suggests all the things strong and beautiful and joyous, and gives me a sense of physical happiness.

Alexander Graham Bell, whose invention of the telephone was incidental to his lifelong concern with the deaf, took her aside when she was twenty and, spelling out the words letter by letter in her palm, told her, "It seems to me, Helen, a day must come when love, which is more than friendship, will knock at the door of your heart and demand to be let in." She answered that she did think of love sometimes, but as "a beautiful flower which I may not touch, but whose fragrance makes the garden a place of delight just the same." He thought this over, and insisted, "Do not think that because you cannot see or hear, you are debarred from the supreme happiness of woman.... Life does strange things to us." And she replied, with sad realism, "I can't imagine a man wanting to marry me. I should think it would seem like marrying a statue."

Yet when a proposal came she did not reject it: "I yielded to an imperious longing to be a part of a man's life." The proposer was Peter Fagan, Annie Sullivan Macy's twenty-nine-year-old secretary. Fagan had been an editorial associate of Annie's husband, John Macy. Macy had met the two women when Helen was enrolled at Radcliffe, in the years from 1900 to 1904; he had come to Harvard in 1895, from Detroit, on a scholarship and, after a distinguished undergraduate career, eked out a living as an assistant in English, and was a fiercely socialist writer and poet. To her surprise, Annie at thirty-eight found herself being courted by this brilliant and fiery man, eleven years her junior. They married in 1905, after John had received Helen's approval and assured her that she and her teacher "were to go on just as before." After the marriage, the three shared a farmhouse in Wrentham, Massachusetts, the surrounding property fixed up with stone walls and guide wires that enabled Helen to take walks by herself.

By 1916, however, John had fled this ménage, Annie was emotionally crushed and physically unwell, and Helen had returned from an unsuccessful Chautauqua tour preaching pacifism to a nation gearing up for war. At this low point, Fagan began to spell avowals into Helen's palm, and, in Annie's absence, their courtship proceeded as far as the application for a marriage license in Boston. The City Registrar leaked the tidbit to the Boston *Globe*, and Helen's mother, who had been about to take her daughter back to Alabama for a stay, went into furious action. She did not like Fagan, and she did not think Helen should ever marry. A melodramatic tangle of banishments, secret communications, planned abductions, and thwarted elopements followed, with the deaf-blind thirty-six-year-old celebrity showing all the pluck and guile of a girl in love. Fagan, however, was finally scared off, disappearing from history; to his credit, he never attempted to trade on his doomed liaison with Helen Keller.

"You know, you'd make someone a wonderful ex-wife."

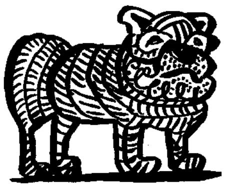
Long afterward, in "Midstream: My Later Life" (1929), Helen wrote philosophically of the escapade: "I cannot account for my behavior. . . . I seem to have acted exactly opposite to my nature." But, she went on, "I am glad that I have had the experience of being loved and desired. The fault was not in the loving, but in the circumstances." Herrmann does not flinch from specifying exactly what "the experience of being loved" consisted of:

> By "loving," Helen . . . did not mean a few chaste kisses. As a militant socialist, she would not have hesitated to consummate her love for Peter Fagan. The circles in which she and her young lover moved were in rebellion against the sexual mores of the Victorian age. Many of their friends—John Macy, John Reed and his Bohemian wife, Louise Bryant, as well as Emma Goldman—were ardent champions of free love.

In truth, sex is one experience that would be relatively complete for a deaf-blind person—a matter of tactile sensation and heated imagination, usually conducted in the dark anyway, and with few words. The caresses of arousal should come easily to one whose main language is touch. But sexual fulfillment, for all of us, is bounded by needs and dependencies of other kinds, and those in Helen Keller's case were exceptionally acute. Her family had distinguished antecedents—her mother was related to the Adamses of Massachusetts and the orator Edward Everett, and Helen had been born on a six-hundred-and-forty-acre tract idyllic with beautiful trees and gardens—but was far from rich; her father, a moody Confederate veteran and small-town newspaper editor of Swiss descent, could scarcely afford to pay Annie Sullivan her twenty-five dollars a month and died, in 1896, deeply in debt. Helen's independence from her stifling Alabama family could be acquired only through her dependence upon Annie Sullivan and the international world of deaf-blind care and charity. Her writings brought in something, and her inspirational appearances on the lecture circuit something else; but she was happiest earning money in vaudeville, in which she and Annie performed a sedate skit off and on in the early twenties. She wrote in "Midstream":

> My teacher was not happy in vaudeville. She could never get used to the rush, glare, and noise of the theatre; but I enjoyed it keenly. At first it seemed odd to find ourselves on the same "bill" with acrobats, monkeys, horses, dogs, and parrots; but our little act was dignified and people seemed to like it. I found the world of vaudeville much more amusing than the world I had always lived in, and I liked it. I liked to feel the warm tide of human life pulsing round and round me.

From her tumultuous childhood on, Helen liked commotion: airplane rides, storms at sea, horseback riding, the proximate swirl of Martha Graham dances—all this fed her starved, fearless soul. Annie, a half-blind Irish pauper child whose keen mind had lifted her from the abysmal depths of a Massachusetts almshouse, had quite another temperament. She was reclusive, shy, and suspicious, a decidedly disaffected Catholic where Helen was a rapt Swedenborgian, and politically skeptical where Helen was an ardent socialist, pacifist, and suffragist. According to Herrmann, Annie told her biographer that "she and the adult Helen had such fundamentally different conceptions of life that they would have loathed one another had they met under ordinary circumstances."



But the two were yoked together, literally hand in hand as Annie spelled out, hour after hour, descriptions and answers for her insatiably inquisitive companion. According to Herrmann, "Annie found constantly being with Helen a nerve-wracking experience, and after spelling to her for several hours, often suffered from a headache and nausea." A reviewer of Helen's first book bluntly wrote, "It is perhaps worth reminding the readers that the wonderful feat of drawing Helen Keller out of her hopeless darkness was only accomplished by sacrificing for it another woman's whole life." In truth, each woman had rescued the other from obscurity; alone, each would have been considerably diminished. Together, they enjoyed comfortable homes, acquaintance with the rich and famous, and a life style that included vacations, expensive apparel, pedigreed dogs, and generous gifts to others. John Macy had accused Annie of "resembling the rich in the vulgarity of your tastes." Only when, in 1924, Helen became affiliated, as "national and international counselor" (i.e., fund-raiser), with the American Foundation for the Blind, a 1921 amalgamation of lesser agencies, did the two women and their assistants find steady work and financial security, even though—Helen wrote in "Teacher: Anne Sullivan Macy" (1955)—"Teacher and I felt real shame to appear as mendicants at the doors of plenty." In "Midstream" she paints a sardonic picture of fund-raising, saying that until a better method is found

> individuals like myself will continue to travel up and down the land, and up and down in the elevators of great office buildings, to solicit funds from rich men. We will stand at doors and street corners, hat in hand, begging pennies from every passer-by, we will climb on to the running board of automobiles held in traffic to plead with some wealthy person to take our precious cause under his golden wing.

In 1965, as she lay incapacitated, Helen Keller was one of twenty women elected to the Women's Hall of Fame at the New York World's Fair. She and Eleanor Roosevelt received the most votes. Now that Mrs. Roosevelt has been plausibly outed as a lesbian, there is a healthy interest in the Sapphic side of Helen Keller. "How tenderly she fondled my hand!" Helen wrote of Annie's last living hours. The blind-deaf woman perforce clung to Annie until Teacher's death, in 1936, and after that to Polly Thomson, a spinster Scotswoman, less temperamental and brilliant than Annie but a faithful and constant companion until her death, in 1960. Nella Braddy Henney—Annie's biographer and a longtime intimate—assured an inquirer that all three were "women who liked men." Keller well into her middle age projected sexual charisma, and in 1922 received by mail a proposal of marriage to which she replied in one of her frankest, most moving letters:

> Since my youth I have desired the love of a man. Sometimes I wondered rebelliously why Fate has trifled with me so strangely, why I was tantalized with bodily capabilities I could not fulfill. But Time, the great discipliner, has done his work well.

She goes on to explain that her suitor may have been misled by her writings, wherein "one hides as much as possible one's awkwardness and helplessness under a fine philosophy and a smiling face," and to acknowledge "the wise, loving ministrations of my teacher, Mrs. Macy, who since my earliest childhood has been a light to me in all dark places."

Love takes many forms outside the narrow groove of copulative heterosexual relations. Any close family seethes with it, and with jealousy, possessiveness, and the resentments bred of interdependence. It was Keller's fate, bound as she was to a household of keepers, to be a precious, demanding child all her life. Herrmann theorizes that her "startling metamorphosis," after the revelation of language at the well pump, from violent little savage to avid student and "angel child" flowed from the recognition that compliance and sweetness were the way to win protection from the vast world of "seeing, hearing people." Yet hostility toward Teacher surfaced in her dreams, and hostility toward the status quo in her radical politics. Though she no longer hit and pinched members of her family, she championed the Wobblies, the Russian Revolution, Margaret Sanger's campaign for birth control, and the N.A.A.C.P. "Ever since childhood," she announced, "my feelings have been with the slaves." Her outspoken liberalism affronted her mother, irritated Annie, and piqued her rich benefactors, but helped create, it may be, the general public's love of her, and her aura of sainthood. Her cosmic optimism added to her radiance, and this radiance furthered her acceptance and self-preservation among the seeing.

As evidence of the spell she cast, her books remain, some of them still in print. Helen's years at Radcliffe, ending in her graduation cum laude in 1904, were a heroic ordeal for both her and Teacher: Annie had to spell out every lecture into the student's palm, and for hours a day had to comprehend and translate written material—German, French, history, geometry, physics, philosophy—well beyond the limits of her own education. Her fragile eyes, injured by trachoma in her girlhood, failed to the point that she "could not see much farther than the end of her nose." Most of the course matter did not exist in Braille, little in the way of companionship could be coaxed from the other students, and of the rather crusty and distant professors only one, William Allan Neilson, "took the time to master the manual finger language so he could communicate directly with her." Another warm spot in the faculty was Charles Townsend Copeland, who encouraged Helen in English composition. He wrote, "In some of her work she has shown that she can write better than any pupil I have ever had, man or woman. She has an excellent 'ear' for the flow of sentences." Her written work, though a bit flowery and lofty for modern tastes, does have a lively, engaging, intricately modulated voice, whereas she herself—to her grief—could never come close to talking like other people. Speech and writing are different dialects of a language.

Helen's themes for Copeland came to the attention of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which paid her three thousand dollars for the series of articles that became her first book, "The Story of My Life" (1903). She had learned to touch-type, yet, even so, found writing such a burden that Annie had to remind her sternly, "The game of words is the only game you can play on equal terms with the best of them." Annie, as her letters show, wrote very well, as did John Macy; these two certainly exercised a shaping hand on Keller's early articles and books. But the spirit and content are Helen's. Her sensory limitations compel her to contemplate the topics of perception and consciousness that have perennially concerned philosophers. In "The World I Live In" she writes of how Descartes's "I think, therefore I am" persuaded her of her own existence, and of how the "horizon" of odor, the far limit of a scent, gave her the idea of distance which the more fortunate easily gather from sight and sound. With a hard-earned Emersonianism she writes, "Sometimes it seems as if the very substance of my flesh were so many eyes looking out at will upon a world new created every day." With wry Emersonian self-regard she proclaims, "I am burdened with a Puritanical sense of obligation to set the world to rights." Her desperate need to break out of her maddening prison gives her prose a shine of triumph, a giddy honesty. Her story, more than any told before or since, came to represent the pathos and promise of the sensorially deprived. Van Wyck Brooks's biographical sketch of Keller, in 1956, mentions a haunting detail that most biographers omit. Before Helen's "soul was set free" by her realizing the connection between the spelled-out "w-a-t-e-r" on her hand and the silvery, gushing reality of pump water, Annie had tapped out the word "d-o-l-l." The child had failed to grasp the connection between these taps and the doll she held but memorized the pattern of finger motions and tried them out on her old pet setter, Belle, hitherto her most understanding companion. Then the light dawned, and "I understood that it was possible for me to communicate with other people by these signs. Thoughts that ran forward and backward came to me quickly,—thoughts that seemed to start in my brain and spread all over me. . . . I felt joyous, strong, equal to my limitations." ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, by Roxana Robinson (Random House; $25). Nervy Emma is married to icky Warren; handsome Peter is married to posh Caroline. When these pairs founder and Emma weds Peter, each brings to the union a furious ex-spouse and a peeved, baffled daughter. Tribulation ensues, played out on the leafy side streets off Park Avenue, at Lutèce, at Nightingale, and on the tennis court. Almost no one—surprise!—acquits himself well, but the novel escapes being left at the beach house by how deeply Robinson is able to etch the constrictions of Emma's narrow heart.

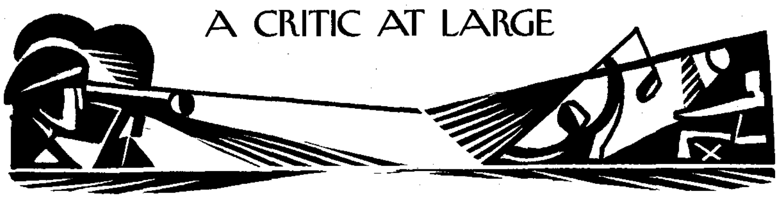
THE FALL OF A SPARROW, by Robert Hellenga (Scribners; $25). This seems to be about a middle-aged Midwestern professor screwing up an exemplary life. He lets his cherished wife leave him because of a dispute over their daughter's gravestone; he has a scandalous affair with one of his students; and, neglecting his younger daughters, he goes off to Bologna to cover the trial of the neo-Fascists who blew up his eldest daughter years before. Like the author, however, he keeps pulling rabbits out of hats, and when you cry at the end you won't be sure if your tears are of joy or of sorrow.

TAKEN IN, by Beverly Coyle (Viking; $24.95). In Coyle's wrenching third novel, the mostly ordinary Robb family is bedevilled by its own intentions: when their idealistic son, Matt, becomes embroiled with a young prostitute, good works lead to horrific events. It is Gretchen, the fifteen-year-old daughter, who shepherds the family toward redemption. Like Alice Hoffman, Coyle knows teen-agers, but she also knows how to handle happenstance and calamity—as though the gods themselves were fifteen-year-olds.

LEAVING SMALL'S HOTEL, by Eric Kraft (Picador; $23). A wonderful *matryoshka* of a novel, with at least five stories nested one inside the other: novel, satire, memoir, radio play, murder mystery. In the central tale, Peter Leroy, assistant innkeeper, treats his guests to nightly readings about his crackpot boyhood business ventures (the Magnetomic Flying-Saucer Detector!). As he and his wife, Albertine, desperately try to unload this albatross of a property, the various tales move toward contrasting climaxes with just the sort of spectacular intricacy that makes a business fail and a novel fly.

CITIES OF THE PLAIN, by Cormac McCarthy (Knopf; $24). This tragic last volume of the Border Trilogy sees the American West enter the modern world, as the cowboy John Grady Cole looks down from a rock bluff at the city lights "strewn across the desert floor like a tiara laid out upon a jeweler's blackcloth." McCarthy's language carries a brooding, evolutionary sense of time and labor—in his hands the changing of a tire on an old truck becomes a mythic deed. The weight of history rests on the shoulders of John Grady, too, and he's doomed to learn that "when things are gone they're gone. They aint comin back."

A CRITIC AT LARGE



TRICK AND TREAT

Can we still be scared of "Halloween"?

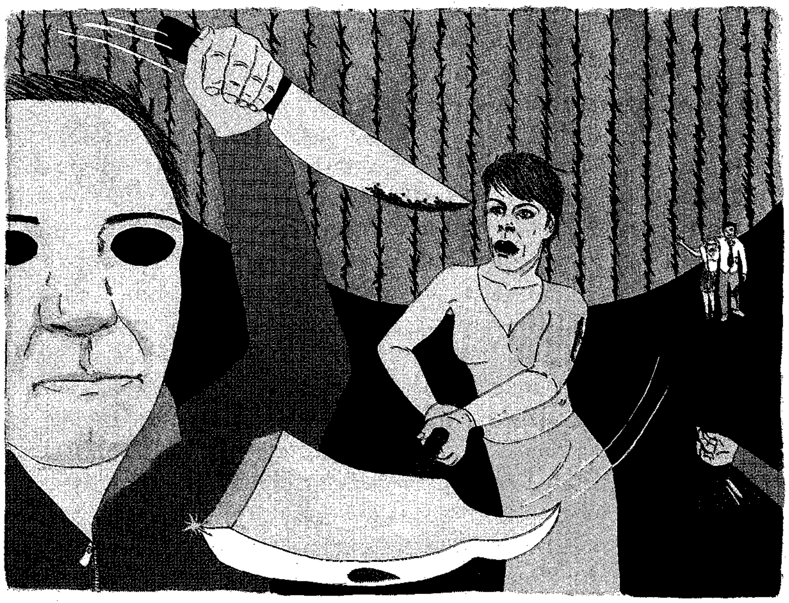
BY ANTHONY LANE

WHO is Michael? What is he? I refer to Michael Myers: not the funny one from "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery" but the other one—the local man of mystery who has made life so difficult for the residents of Haddonfield, Illinois. We first saw him as a six-year-old boy holding a knife, in the opening sequence of John Carpenter's "Halloween." Michael, who had just slain his sister, was locked away for good. Needless to say, he escaped, and the movie caught up with him as he came back to town. Now a strapping lad in a white rubber mask, he spent the best part of ninety minutes trying to kill seventeen-year-old Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis). He failed, and returned to the chase in "Halloween 2," in which we learned that Laurie was his other sister. Five sequels, of rapidly diminishing worth, made you wonder what exactly Michael's business strategy was. Now the man is here again, in "Halloween: H20," pitting himself against Laurie one last time.

Whether "man" is the right word is open to debate. In the credits of the original picture, he was listed as "The Shape"—a name that hinted at diabolical powers of transmutation, though to modern ears it makes him sound like a supermodel. ("Laurie wanted to kick Shape's ass," John Carpenter told me approvingly.) In the latest installment, our heroine summons Michael with the cry of "Psycho!," which is at once a nod to movie buffs and an indictment of his mental state. Dr. Sam Loomis (Donald Pleasence), who tried to treat Michael and ended up tracking him through the course of several films, had little truck with such delicate psychological terms. In the first movie he referred to his former patient as "the evil"; by the time of "Halloween 4," he had narrowed this down to "evil on two legs."

The new picture, directed by Steve Miner, is subtitled "H20" not because Michael has decided to slip something nasty into Haddonfield's water supply but simply because twenty years have passed since Carpenter's film. You could be forgiven for thinking that the "Halloween" franchise was dead and buried, but in 1996 Wes Craven's "Scream" raised it smartly from the grave. "Scream" climaxed with the villains' stabbing themselves for the sake of an alibi—an ideal image for the bewildering narcissism of the whole enterprise, in which a variety of clean-cut students either suffered or perpetrated violence through a tangle of movie references. Specifically, they were all worshippers of "Halloween," and of the rigor with which it observes the rules of horror. One of the more unbendable rules states that, whenever the television is switched on in a scary film, another scary film will be playing; it's never golf or Home Shopping, although both have terrors of their own. During "Scream," we kept seeing Jamie Lee Curtis's face flickering in the corner of the room; she was still there when Neve Campbell, with a nice easy follow-through, crunched the TV set onto the killer's head.

With a plug like that, it was inevitable that Michael and Laurie would be dusted down and brought out to play. It's a relief to see Curtis back in the series again, not just because she has been AWOL since "Halloween 2" but because she makes such a welcome change from all those kids. I find the teen-agers of "Scream" wholly interchangeable; it is hard to be mortified by the demise of those who have given little evidence of living. Curtis was hardly more than a kid herself in "Halloween," but there was always an uncommon gravity in those long-boned, elegant features: she was at once more virginal than the jocks and bimbos around her and more adult—less convinced by the notion of the world as a playground, especially after it turned into a charnel house. Now, in "H20," she has grown into a single mother, a secret drinker, and (under an assumed name) the headmistress of a school in Summer Glen, California. The movie delves into her fraught relations with her son, who has reached the age that Laurie was in the first movie; her experience in Haddonfield was, as Curtis dryly put it to me recently, "not without its fallout." There is no mention in "H20" of Jamie, Laurie's little girl, whom the bogeyman pursued in "Halloween 4." In the final shot of that picture, Jamie herself was



The night he came home: Jamie Lee Curtis gets one more shot at Michael Myers in "H20."

LARA TOMLIN

gripped by demonic possession, clasping a long knife, just like her uncle Michael. What *is* it with this family?

THERE were two reasons why I did not see "Halloween" when it came out. First, I was not legally old enough to do so, and second, I wouldn't have been caught dead at a horror flick. When you are in the full flush of juvenile movie snobbery, you don't go and see films that excite you for an hour and a half; you go and see films that bore your socks off for three hours, on the medicinal principle that they must be good for you. Scornful of Illinois, I preferred movies that were set either north of Hamburg or east of Prague, and replaced orthodox narrative with at least three of the following: a dream sequence, a dwarf, a clown removing his makeup, a religious crisis, and a nude bathing scene. After three years and much huffing, however, I was persuaded to skip the new Tarkovsky and see "Halloween" instead. And that was that.

By now, I must have seen the movie twelve or thirteen times, but, on that first viewing, most of the in-jokes remained too in for me. I did not yet know that Jamie Lee Curtis was the daughter of Janet Leigh, or that Sam Loomis was named after the John Gavin character in "Psycho." I got no sneaky countercultural thrill from the fact that "Halloween" had cost only three hundred thousand dollars. (It has since recouped that sum a hundred and fifty times over.) I didn't even realize that Michael's headgear was a spare William Shatner mask from "Star Trek." All I knew was that this guy Myers had parked in my head and was refusing to move on. I couldn't shake the four-note mantra of the score (composed by Carpenter himself) or the even less florid piano theme—a one-finger plink—that accompanies Michael's arrival at the head of the stairs. Indeed, the whole movie seemed to work in dotted crotchets: as you braced yourself for a fright, Carpenter would hold for an instant and *then* let fly, just as you were relaxing into the delusion that nothing was going to happen. It was a method inherited from Hitchcock, and it barely survives in today's movies, which tend to deliver their traumas right on time.

Best of all, there was Laurie's infamous slump and slide against a wall. The wall takes up half the screen—the other half is shadow, and we know that Michael will jump out of it. But he doesn't jump; he *fades* into view. The white face slowly glimmers out of the dark like a memory that you have struggled to recover, or like a ghost who is bashful of his own remorseless power to scare. The sound in the movie theatre at that moment was like nothing I had heard before: a rising siren moan, not unmixed with pleasure. Carpenter had taken an old and cloudy conceit—the maniac on the loose—and distilled it to something pure and clean. Tarkovsky would have wept.

Carpenter's achievement was to suggest that there was nothing exotic about horror; that it was more inbred than outlandish; and that it was best considered as the evil twin of what one might call the lyrical conservatism of American movies. "There's no place like home," intones Dorothy, and yet Oz is peopled with figures adapted from those whom she loved—and feared—in Kansas. And what of "Meet Me in St. Louis," a rapturous hymn to the comforts of the known which suddenly dispatches one of its elect, Tootie, into the awesome ritual of Halloween? Carpenter's film may be said to have sprung from Tootie's fevered-dreams; I like to think that she grew up, married, and had a grandson named Michael.

That is why, after "Halloween," small towns—not just in the movies—looked like paradises lost. If "Jaws" made us check the blue pleasure ground of the sea every time we dipped our toes in, "Halloween" made us wonder whether suburban houses, set back peacefully from the road, were quite the refuge that had always been promised. Laurie runs from one door to the next, trying to rouse sleepy householders with her howls; finally, she is alone with Michael in a single dark dwelling. When they grapple on the second floor and she pulls off his white rubber mask, the man underneath is more like a boy—a farm boy, almost, with broad, puffy features, who looks rather surprised to be exposed in this way. "Was it the bogeyman?" Laurie asks in the last lines of the movie. "As a matter of fact, it was," says Loomis.

The good doctor is onto something: Michael Myers *is* a matter of fact. In the world proposed by the film, he is part of the landscape, or the furniture. Even when Loomis puts six bullets in him, he simply moves on. These days, such a beautifully smooth gear change into the supernatural would look like a cute setup for a sequel, but Carpenter had no such plan; he just wanted Michael to stay out there, biding his time. ("An O. Henry ending," the director calls it now.) That is why a movie that started with the pantherish glide of a Steadicam closes with still shots of all the places—the corners, the stairs—where Michael has been, and where he may yet come again. There's no place like home.

FREUD, as usual, was on the case long before movies got there. In his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," he demonstrated, via inspired linguistic sleuthing, that *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (uncanny) are on a collision course, and that at some point they mean the same thing. Both words whisper of secrecy and concealment, and they lead Freud toward what any moviegoer would recognize as the full robes and trappings of horror: the inanimate that dawns into life, the perplexing appearance of a double, the action that unnerves by repetition—all those occasions on which the familiar grows strange. The problem with horror flicks, of course, and the reason so many of them disappoint, is the speed with which the strange becomes not just familiar but a total drag. For every "Halloween," with its effortless if unwitting dramatization of Freudian themes, there was a "Nightmare on Elm Street Part Four" or a "Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter," which itself was swiftly followed—and, you might think, severely compromised—by "Friday the 13th Part V: A New Beginning."

The presiding irony of horror is that, while no genre offers more imaginative license, few of the directors—or, indeed, the novelists—who turn to it have more than a thimbleful of imagination in the first place. (They have a sweet tooth for the fantastic and the glutinous, which is hardly the same thing.) When visionaries and obsessives deign to frighten us, on the other hand, the results can be spectacular: look at Murnau's "Nosferatu," Dreyer's "Vampyr," or the Karloff "Frankenstein" pictures (which redefined horror as a species of warped romance). Neither Fritz Lang nor Buñuel ever made a straight horror movie, and yet all their work is laced with the horrific; the Peter Lorre of "M" is both a serial killer and the cowering victim of his own monstrosity. As for Hitchcock and lesser masters such as Jacques Tourneur, the director of the original "Cat People," their movies are mischievous and oddly puritan; Hitch sometimes feels like the torturer who tickles your soles with a feather while his poker warms in the fire. John Carpenter is best seen, I think, as the last of that breed; "Halloween" may have spawned some bastard children, but in fact it glances back longingly to the nineteen-forties and fifties—to an age when it was enough to scare us as efficiently as possible. If people screamed loud enough, the deeper and more pungent fears would seep out. Now it is 1998, and what is there to be scared of?

I attended a sneak preview of "H20" at the Gotham on Third Avenue. I bought my gallon pail of Coke, took my seat, and stared around. It didn't really matter if the movie spooked me or not, because I was already terrified by the audience. It seemed unlikely that any of them had seen "Halloween" when it first came out, for the simple reason that none of them had been born yet. They made me feel seventy-five years old, a sensation enhanced by the opening credits. Janet Leigh has a cameo in the movie ("If I could be maternal for a moment," she says to Jamie Lee Curtis), but her name drew no response; when LL Cool J came up, on the other hand, the place exploded. You could argue that this was no more than an update of 1978, when Carpenter specialists had snickered at Sam Loomis; but the Gotham was not full of specialists. It was full of moviegoers, and what gave me the creeps was not what they knew, or what they didn't know, but what they didn't care to feel. To them, "H20" was a comedy—a little black round the edges, sure, but basically a scream.

Miner's movie is far bloodier than "Halloween," whose severe lack of ketchup was a tribute not merely to its budget restrictions but also to Carpenter's feeling for the sore spot. (Blood is not frightening; what worries people is the uncertain certainty that it might yet be shed.) But the kids laughed at the gore, whooped at the shocks, and left the theatre in merriment. All those George Bush-period warnings about media desensitization suddenly seemed a little less crusty than before.

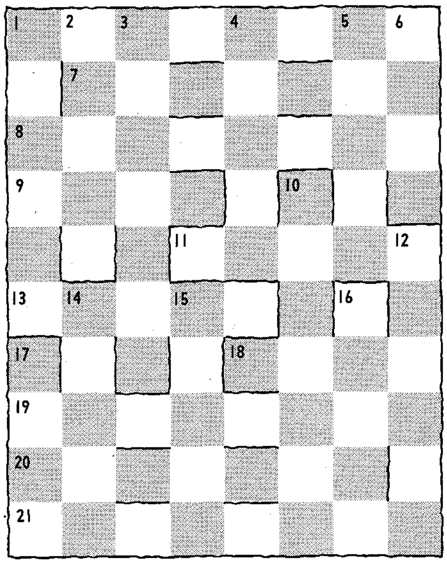
One more layer of innocence had peeled away here: not the innocence of joy but the even more primal innocence that allows us to be terrified. It asks that we revisit, however briefly, the nightmares that first enfolded us in the nursery, when patterns on the wallpaper assumed shapes and rocking rhythms of their own. If you are seventeen in America today, however, with no serious bogeymen in your life, what could possibly be less cool than slipping back into infancy? Why bother to be scared out of your wits when wits are both your plumage and your claws?

In keeping with my newfound senescence, I *was* scared by "H20." It is plainly the only serious "Halloween" movie since Carpenter's original, and Miner stokes his tale into a kind of glowing dread. The script, like that of "Scream," keeps winking at the audience, but Jamie Lee Curtis, to her immense credit, plays it with a straight and stricken face. "Halloween" was stripped to the bone and untroubled by motives, whereas "H20" labors under the fleshy weight of the past. To put it crudely, Laurie is now as much of a head case as Michael himself, and you can feel the thunder in the air when they meet face to face. They gaze at each other through a small round window; it resembles a porthole, or a looking glass, and it brings sharply to mind what Freud said of the double—that it is "the uncanny harbinger of death." You realize that Michael has become, if not a mirror image of Laurie, then the other half of her being: he cannot live without her, and she cannot truly live until he dies.

No wonder, as the finale looms, that Laurie declines to flee; instead, she takes an axe and marches back to the fray. The camera rises high to watch her go, as if she were Gary Cooper in "High Noon." Jamie Lee Curtis described this scene to me as "strapping on the guns." She went on, "By running, Laurie is never going to redeem her soul, but if she turns around and faces the person who took away *everything* that would have given her pleasure—her ability to trust, to love—then what she gains by that act is to get her soul back." This may sound heavy, but the moment itself is, as Curtis puts it, "weightless." With the end in sight, after all these years of Michael, "you feel high, on some level free." As a matter of fact, you do. ♦

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 54 BY TODD McCLARY



ACROSS

1 Sunset Boulevard star leading grand farewell performance (4,4)
7 Willa Cather heroine changed a nation (7)
8 A.T. & T. desires foreign diplomats (8)
9 Poorly sewn material for rags? (4)
11 Tiles specially designed for tropical locale (5)
13 Belgian village among cypresses (5)
18 Look noble (4)
19 Threaten to wrap up incense (8)
20 Pasta luncheon's ending with lots (7)
21 Emphasized sweets must be sent back (8)

DOWN

1 Overheard sailors' tune in cabin (6)
2 First of women swallowed red liquid (5)
3 An annoying person leads to North Sea port (7)
4 Hosiery boxes (5)
5 Relative in Riviera resort listened to (5)
6 Show disgust initially grabbing snake (4)
10 Claims supporter is breaking orders from the bar? (7)
12 Escalating garbage free for burning (6)
14 Wine to drink up (5)
15 Bill wearing First Lady's slip (5)
16 Birds inside these eggs seen from behind (5)
17 Nearly crowded rooms (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 53 appears on page 72. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

SHORE LEAVE

BY HENRY ALFORD

Note: All words in boldface are names of seashells found in the Mollusks Library at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.

DARLING,

You mustn't think me a **Perverse Whelk**. But, stranded here at the beach house as I have been these many weeks, with nothing except Mother and a few tattered field guides to seashells to keep me company, I have allowed desolation to get the better of me. And now, my sweet, things have come to a rather tragic pass, and I fear I must relate some painful news: I am leaving you, darling. Leaving you for **Ambassador Cone**.

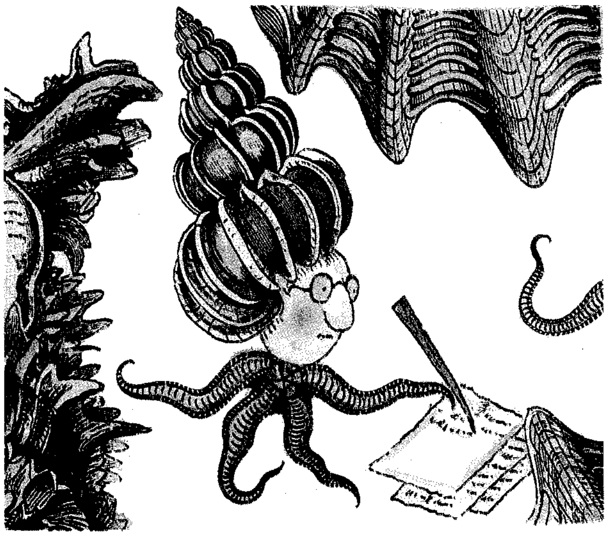
Where to begin? Mother's health, as you know, has worsened. She has a **Delicate Tibia**. She is riddled with **Tuberculate Purpura**. She has **Blister-like Polygyra** and a **Depressed Vitrinella**—the early symptoms of **Conoidal Melanella**. As if this weren't enough, her psychological state, too, continues southward, causing her to appear quite the **Unstable Limpet** at times. I'm afraid she's taken to wearing those damned hats again. First it was a **Scotch Bonnet** to the boat-club dinner dance, then a **Military Turban** to the Fourth of July fireworks, then a **Fool's Cap** to Barbara Rogers' awful cocktail party. Two Thursdays ago, I invited her to a lunch at the **Ponderous Ark** that was being given for **Kitten Cowrie**, the electricity heiress; Mother arrived wearing a **Papal Miter**. Worse, Mother and Kitten took an instant dislike to each other, which was made worse by Mother's confiding to the whole assemblage that Kitten has been dating Triton Kelsey. Mother made all sorts of disparaging comments about "that **Lurid Dwarf Triton**," nattering on about how he is a **Belligerent Rock-Shell**, and how he works as a **Pea Scraper** in Bridgeport. (You know, Mother, despite her many charms, can be a terrific snob.) Then she delivered her bombshell: "Well, of course, a girl like Kitten would be interested in Triton, given his, uh, reputation."

"Reputation?" someone asked.

"He's said to have a **Giant Date Mussel**," Mother said.

"Why, you **Geriatric Turret Shell**!" Kitten barked.

"Oh, everyone knows about **Kelsey's Date Mussel**," Mother calmly intoned. "It's a veritable **Elephant's Snout**."



Never have I felt like such an **Ass's Ear**. Fortunately, that was when Ambassador Cone came to the rescue. Seated at an adjoining table, he stood and helped me quickly decant Mother from the Ark, and then sped us home. He was heroic. So, of course, last night, when it was time to celebrate Mother's eightieth, I invited Cone. That may have been the smartest act of my life. For Kitten and Kelsey, you see, incensed by Mother's comments at the cocktail party, had hired a gunman—a gentleman by the name of **Bent-Nose Macoma**—to come to Mother's birthday party and exact revenge. Macoma, accompanied by a fellow called **Shark Eye**, burst into the room, brandishing a **Snub-Nosed Corbula**. We all shrieked with fear; my jade **Rhinoceros Vase** crashed to the floor, scattering large sprays of **False Prickly Winkle** and **Hearty Rupellaria**.

I panicked, uncertain of what I should do. But, once again, Cone came to the rescue: running over to the wall where Mother displays her hats, he yelled, "Quick, the **Flame Helmet**!" He strapped on the helmet and activated it, causing the horrid intruders to flee in terror. (Actually, memory is kind; first, he grabbed the **Dwarf Helmet**, accidentally reducing Barbara Rogers to the size of a **Very Small Dwarf Olive**—most amusing. But I digress.)

When the flames subsided, Mother, scared, finally agreed to let us check her in to the **Chambered Nautilus**, where Dr. Inman is looking after her. Meanwhile, Cone and I are off for a month at the **Superb Gaza**; you can write to me c/o the Embassy.

This strange turn of events has caused me no small amount of anguish, my darling, and I wholly understand if you think me a terrible **Greedy Dove Shell**. But surely you will understand how I have been made to feel abandoned here at land's end. However, please know that a part of me will always regret what was lost between us, and that this part of me will remain forever,

Your **Wedding Cake Venus** ♦

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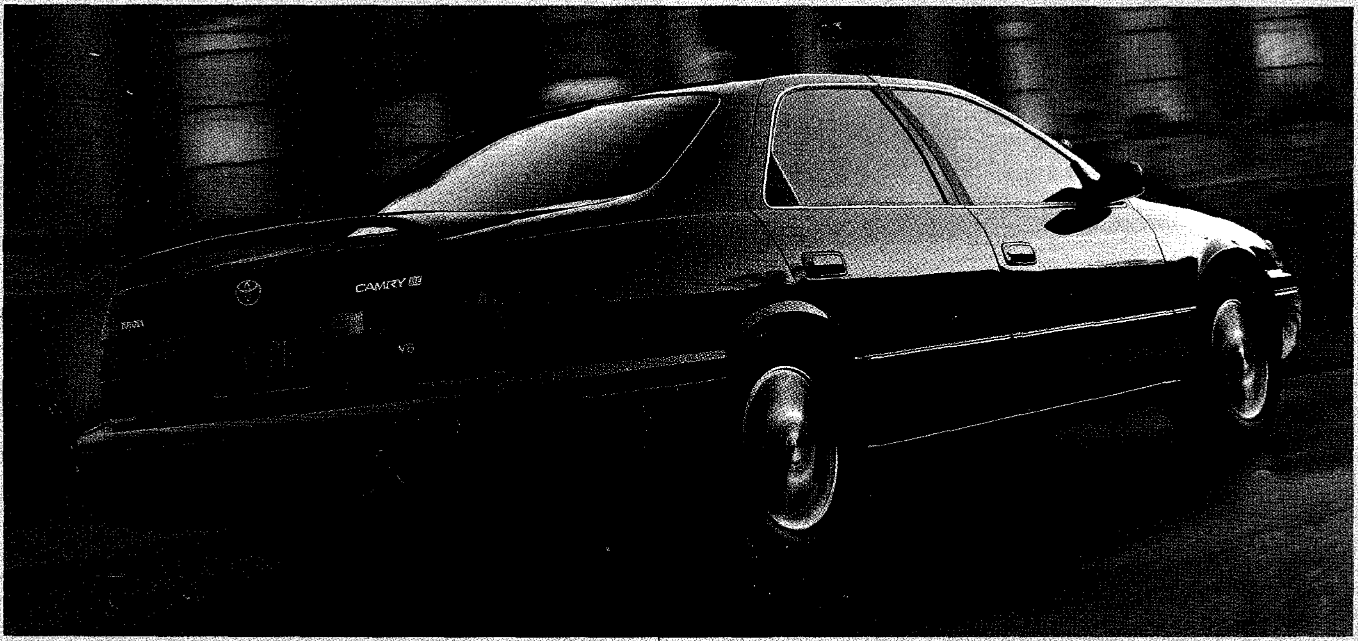

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